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THE Nation.

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THE EDITORS

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Letters

Obama, Change South Asia Policy

Arlington, Va.

Your lead editorial "After Mumbai" [Dec. 22] offers the right policy prescription for South Asia to President-elect Obama. Given the failure of the "war on terror" in Afghanistan and the spillover into Pakistan and beyond, a military surge could exacerbate the grave situation. The region is a nuclear flashpoint. It has been a hotbed of ethnic and sectarian violence, terrorism, secessionist insurgencies and interstate hostilities for well over half a century. Disputed territories between India and Pakistan, most notably Kashmir, have led to wars and perennial border skirmishes.

In the wake of terror attacks in Mumbai—apparently backed by Lashkar-e-Taiba, a terrorist organization aligned with the Kashmir cause, now in the Al Qaeda network—tensions between India and Pakistan are close to spinning out of control. A broader rethinking of the regional strategy is in order. Alternatives to military intervention are critical. A negotiated solution involving India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, Russia and Iran is imperative. Encouraging a dialogue between aggrieved tribal and ethnic groups and ruling authorities would be key to fostering peace and stability in South Asia. This calls for radical policy change. Can Obama do it?

Saira Yamin, *analyst*
Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution
George Mason University

Obama, Rethink Afghanistan

Falls Church, Va.

Robert Dreyfuss's otherwise excellent "Obama's Afghan Dilemma" [Dec. 22] concludes on a troubling note: suggesting that Obama should "offer an end to US occupation of Afghanistan if the Taliban-led movement abandons its ties to Al Qaeda." This shortcut solution, which purports to realize our minimal goal of pushing Al Qaeda out of Afghanistan, sadly echoes our decision in 1989 to walk away from a chaotic Afghanistan once Soviet forces were driven out. Now as then, a premature departure from an admittedly complex situation would betray a broader purpose and promise to the Afghan people. Now as then, we would be abandoning Afghans to turmoil in which foreign-backed elements, many of them war criminals, would continue to struggle for supremacy.

The alternative course would be much harder: to expend money and blood to rebuild a peaceful, relatively democratic state at peace with its neighbors and free from foreign intervention. This would have been the Afghanistan that Afghans and the world knew before the 1978 coup and 1979 Soviet invasion. While far more difficult and expensive, fulfilling that commitment would at least avoid the calumny of another US/international community betrayal of the long-suffering Afghan people.

Edmund McWilliams, *US Special Envoy to Afghanistan (1988–89)*

Dreyfuss Replies

Alexandria, Va.

Edmund McWilliams's thoughtful comment reflects precisely the painful dilemma that the United States faces. It's unconscionable to abandon Afghanistan, especially since it was the reckless American support for the Afghan jihad in the 1970s and '80s that created most of the mess. But if we start with the premise that the United States can't defeat the Taliban militarily, then we need to come up with an alternative. Most, even the great majority, of those fighting the United States aren't global-minded terrorists. But it's also true that many of them are ultraconservative, even reactionary, on issues from religion to culture to the role of women. The United States is not going to change that. Washington can't reorganize Afghan society, and it can't drag Afghans into the twenty-first century. The Obama administration has to face the fact that Afghanistan may be governed for a long, long time by an ugly bunch

(continued on page 24)

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Toward Peace in Gaza

Israel's invasion of Gaza has dramatically worsened a grave humanitarian crisis and will benefit no one except those who always benefit from war. There is no military solution to what is fundamentally a political conflict. Only a negotiated agreement between strong and unified leadership on both sides can provide the security and peace that Palestinians and Israelis deserve. As we go to press, various international parties are stepping up their calls for a cease-fire. The first priority, of course, is to stop the Israeli bombing and ground invasion and the Hamas rocket fire. But a halt to the fighting should be closely connected to a vigorous and renewed effort to reach a comprehensive peace agreement.

EDITORIAL

The humanitarian crisis now borders on the catastrophic. Gaza's 1.5 million citizens are running out of food, fuel and drinking water. Seventy-five percent of the Gaza Strip is without electricity, and hospitals—low on supplies and powered by emergency generators—are unable to treat adequately the hundreds of wounded pouring through their gates. The sewage system is near collapse, threatening the spread of disease. Already some 600 Palestinians have been killed, a quarter of them civilians, with several thousand injured; ten Israelis have been killed, dozens injured.

After initially refusing to comment on the crisis, President-elect Obama finally said, "The loss of civilian life in Gaza and Israel is a source of deep concern for me." He added, "Starting at the beginning of our administration, we are going to be engaged effectively and consistently in trying to resolve the conflict in the Middle East." Obama should not wait until January 20 to speak out on the importance of a cease-fire and a long-term settlement, especially since the Bush administration has encouraged Israel to continue its military assault rather than push for an end to the fighting.

If Obama were to take swift and courageous steps toward peace once he took office, he would encounter resistance, but he would also find promising new wellsprings of support. J Street, the new Washington lobby that brands itself as "the political arm of the pro-Israel, pro-peace movement," has called for an immediate cease-fire and in general set itself up as a counter to the right-wing AIPAC lobby and its Christian Zionist allies. J Street is joined by other good activist groups, such as Americans for Peace Now and Jewish Voice for Peace. Most of Congress has been shamefully quiescent, but Representative Dennis Kucinich has spoken out courageously against the violence, as have several other members lauded by J Street. And on the first day of Israel's ground invasion, 10,000 Israelis took part in a massive peace demonstration.

The contours of a just peace have been well known to all the players for years. It involves a firm Israeli commitment to withdraw to its 1967 borders, with at most minor and mutually agreed on adjustments; a Palestinian state in the territories with sovereignty over East Jerusalem; and a fair and agreed on resolution of the refugee question. If Israel were to commit itself to such a plan, it would see Palestinian support for armed attacks dry up, as the Palestinian public overwhelmingly favors such a two-state solution. The Arab world does too, as evidenced by the Arab League Peace Initiative of 2002, since reiterated, which adheres to the same principles and offers full recognition of Israel upon acceptance. But as Henry Siegman pointed out in the last issue of *The Nation*, Israel desperately needs strong leadership from Washington to take the risk for peace. If Obama doesn't take concerted action quickly, the hope for a two-state solution will fade, and the region will be cursed with many more years of bloodshed.

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Laila Al-Arian: To live and die in Gaza

Neve Gordon: Israel's war ethic

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The *Nation* Guide to the Nation

NATION POLL

Obama's most disappointing move

'RETIRE BUSH' CONTEST

Winners announced January 12

Misreading Gaza

COMMENT

The current Gaza crisis is the culmination of more than two years of failed strategy, conceived and carried out jointly by the United States and Israel. The first mistake was their refusal to accept the results of the January 2006 Palestinian parliamentary elections, acknowledged by all observers to be free and fair. Hamas won that poll, but instead of engaging the new leadership—and testing its avowal that it would accept, if not applaud, a two-state resolution of the conflict—Israel, with US encouragement, cut off aid, tax revenues and, eventually, almost all connection with the outside world. The policy was brutal and straightforward: Gaza's 1.5 million citizens would be punished for electing leaders unacceptable to Tel Aviv and Washington. The next stage was to encourage a coup by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, despite Hamas's willingness to form a coalition with Abbas's Fatah faction. But Hamas struck first, overthrowing the corrupt and discredited PA in June 2007. Since then, Israel has tightened the siege on Gaza, leading the UN's human rights representative in the territories, Richard Falk, to accuse Israel of committing a "crime against humanity." Even former Mossad official Yossi Alpher said, "It's collective punishment, humanitarian suffering.... I think people really believed that if you starved Gazans, they will get Hamas to stop the attacks. It's repeating a failed policy, mindlessly."

Israel now claims—again, with robust Bush administration support generally echoed in mainstream US media accounts—that Hamas is responsible for the latest flare-up because it refused to renew the six-month cease-fire negotiated in June, the terms of which were an end to Hamas rocket attacks on Israel in exchange for Israel's easing of the blockade. The truth is more complicated: even as the cease-fire was being inked, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak began planning a comprehensive attack on Hamas. Hamas sharply cut back the rocket attacks while building up its military capability. Israel was the first to seriously breach the cease-fire: on November 4 (when the US election guaranteed minimal press coverage), in an attack on a Hamas unit killing six. Hamas took the bait and escalated rocket fire. Those attacks are violations of international law, of course, but the point is, both sides are responsible for the escalation.

There are electoral as well as strategic reasons for Israel's incursion: following the collapse of Ehud Olmert's Kadima-led government last summer, hard-right Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu, who disparaged the cease-fire and has repeatedly called for the destruction of Hamas, has been ahead in the polls for February's parliamentary elections. His opponents, Labor Party leader Barak and Kadima leader and current Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, knew that a major blow against Hamas would draw support from Netanyahu's base—especially if an offensive came in response to a rocket barrage. Indeed, public support for Israel's campaign has—so far—been overwhelming, and no wonder, since Hamas's deadlier rockets now allow it, for the first time, to terrorize large Israeli cities like Ashkelon, Ashdod and Beersheba. Sure enough, Barak, most closely identified with the Gaza offensive, has seen his poll numbers shoot up.

The strategic rationale for Israel's offensive arises from the example of Hezbollah. After years of guerrilla resistance to the

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Noted.

GIVE-NOTHING DEMOCRACY: In the summer of 2007 free-culture guru **Lawrence Lessig** announced he'd be undertaking a project focusing his academic work and activism on understanding and fighting corruption. He founded **Change-Congress.org** to help create an online grassroots constituency for the kinds of pro-democracy reforms that would reduce the influence of big money on legislative outcomes (see "Mr. Lessig Goes to Washington," June 16, 2008). But while Change Congress slowly built an e-mail list and raised money, its first year was relatively low-key, at least partly because of an amorphous mission and an overly broad set of objectives.

But in preparation for the 111th Congress, the group has doubled its staff from two to four, bringing in **Stephanie Taylor** and **Adam Green**, two veterans of **MoveOn.org**. It has also focused its operation on bipartisan clean elections bills that will be reintroduced in the House and Senate this term. The Senate version, co-sponsored by **Dick Durbin** and **Arlen Specter**, would provide public funding for Congressional elections, paid for by a broadcasting fee.

And as this issue went to press, Lessig (who recently moved from Stanford to Harvard) was scheduled to appear on **The Colbert Report** to announce Change Congress's most ambitious campaign yet: a donor strike. Lessig is urging supporters to pledge not to donate any money to politicians who have not signed on as co-sponsors of the pubic-financing bills. "You can help your democracy and do your civic duty by giving nothing," says interim CEO Green, "which is a perfect message for this economy." CHRISTOPHER HAYES

THE KAINE SCRUTINY: On January 21 **Howard Dean** will step down as chair of the **Democratic National Committee** and Virginia Governor **Tim Kaine** will step up. An early endorser of Barack Obama and a prominent campaign surrogate, Kaine was once on the shortlist for veep. He's a safe pick to lead the DNC, though he's not without controversy. Kaine angered progressives in Virginia by supporting coal-fired power plants, repealing the estate tax and opposing stem-cell research and a woman's right to choose. He didn't want the DNC job in the first place and won't take over full time until he leaves the governor's mansion in January 2010, raising questions about the passion and attentiveness he will bring to the position.

That said, Virginia Democrats thrived under Kaine, picking up two US Senate seats, flipping the State Senate, adding seats in the House of Delegates and turning the state blue for Obama. Kaine saw firsthand the value of Dean's fifty-state strategy, which poured money into his gubernatorial election in 2005 and made Virginia a pilot state. He should therefore be predisposed to renew the fifty-state strategy; the DNC's contracts with nearly 200 field organizers expired after the election.

While Kaine tends to his business as governor, the real work at the DNC will be undertaken by new executive director **Jennifer O'Malley Dillon**, a top field operative for Obama who previously ran Iowa for **John Edwards**. *The Atlantic*'s **Marc Ambinder** predicts that under Dillon, the DNC "will significantly expand its campaign organizing capacity and probably its staff," resulting in "Dean's 50 state strategy on steroids." Let's hope so. For now, Kaine's selection doesn't tell us a whole lot about what Obama has planned for the party. ARI BERMAN

GAZA LIVE: Throughout Israel's pummeling of Gaza, live coverage of the war hasn't made it into most American living rooms. That's because Israel hasn't allowed journalists to enter Gaza. Hundreds of foreign reporters have been restricted to showing plumes of smoke rising in the distance inside the Palestinian territory. The media blockade is an attempt by Israeli officials to control the story, denying, for example, a humanitarian disaster without letting journalists see for themselves. The major exception has been **Al Jazeera**, already inside Gaza before the attack.

The Qatari network is unavailable in all but a few locations on American TV. But Al Jazeera—which runs one of the three largest English-language news channels in the world—has been taking some 140 million English- and Arabic-speaking viewers to the Al Shifa hospital, the largest in Gaza. There, electricity comes from generators, keeping the lights on while 75 percent of the Strip has no electricity. Inside, international doctors tell Al Jazeera correspondents **Ayman Mohyaldin** and **Sherine Tadros** that there aren't enough medical supplies. Civilians lying on bloody hospital beds report that their lives are being crippled not only by bombs falling on their houses but by the lack of water and food for the people cowering inside them. Throughout the day on the network, we see one child's pale face after another; children account for at least 25 percent of the dead inside the hospital. On January 6, Al Jazeera interviewed a father sitting next to his two children with bullet holes in their chests. Weeping over them, he said Israeli soldiers put them there. SHANE BAUER

THE SENATE'S SPINE: Forget the Kennedys, the Clintons and even *SNL*'s **Al Franken**. All eyes are on formerly little-known Illinois politician **Roland Burris**, who was appointed by ethically challenged Governor **Rod Blagojevich** to fill Obama's Senate seat. Burris's Washington journey was unceremoniously halted by the Secretary of the Senate, who refused to seat Burris because his paperwork wasn't in order. But the rejection wasn't a matter of bureaucratic tidiness; it was a point of political pride for Senate leader **Harry Reid**, who had said there was no way the Senate would seat any Blagojevich appointee. As we go to press, it looks like Burris has beaten Reid. After Obama spoke kindly about Burris and Senator **Dianne Feinstein** reversed course, Reid met with Burris to work out an arrangement.

Whatever the outcome of this drama, **Open Left** blogger **Chris Bowers** put it best when he asked, "I mean, really, this is the issue where Senate Democrats decide to stand up for themselves?" As Bowers notes, Senate Dems have caved for years on issues like torture and spying—why the sudden constitutional spine now? In the months ahead, the Senate will be the key front for legislation on the stimulus package and **Employee Free Choice**, which could face filibustering from Republicans. Let's hope Senate Dems remember their resolve when it counts.

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Israeli occupation of Lebanon, and aided by a steady supply of increasingly sophisticated arms from Iran and Syria, Hezbollah eventually achieved a deterrent capacity, forcing out the Israelis in 2000. By 2006 it was able to fight Israel to a draw. Hamas has followed the Hezbollah model, and though it is still nowhere near the latter's armed might, if it continues to smuggle arms it could eventually get there. That would mark a revolutionary and, to Israel, deeply threatening development in a relationship that it has always dominated overwhelmingly. In another echo of the 2006 Lebanon war, Israel has, with its latest offensive, aroused the fury of the Arab and Muslim world not only against Israel and the United States but against the Arab regimes that have colluded with them, primarily Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. And not only has Hamas's standing in the region risen, so has that of Syria, Iran and Hezbollah.

Israel claims to favor Fatah and President Abbas over Hamas, since Fatah renounced armed resistance and recognized Israel in order to pursue Palestinian statehood through negotiation. And yet Israel often seems to go out of its way to validate the Hamas claim that such a path is worthless. Hamas asks the Palestinian people, What has the Fatah strategy gotten us? Steady growth in settlement population, as well as a separation wall that steals more of our land, with nothing to show for years of on-and-off negotiation. Hamas claims that its steadfast resistance induced Israel to pull settlers from Gaza. There's plenty to dispute in this scenario, but to most Palestinians the Fatah leadership appears to be a corrupt and politically bankrupt lackey of Israel—in the contemptuous description of Abbas by former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, "a plucked chicken."

Israel does have a more rational strategy, spelled out in the magazine's lead editorial. As *Ha'aretz* columnist Akiva Eldar points out at thenation.com, it is unlikely that Israel will get a better deal than the Arab Peace Initiative. The alternative to that is not only more warfare but, sooner or later, world recognition that there should be only one state in Israel and the territories. And that would be the end of Zionism. ROANE CAREY

The Big Lie on Franken

There is no one Republicans were more determined to keep out of the Senate than comedian Al Franken. It wasn't just that Franken had ridiculed their misrule over the past eight years with a stack of bestselling books and a three-year stint on Air America radio. GOP bosses who listened to what Franken was saying as he challenged Minnesota Senator Norm Coleman came to recognize that while the *Saturday Night Live* alum knew how to get a laugh, he was also a policy wonk with a "great communicator" flair for getting to the heart of economic matters. Ultimately, it was that skill that allowed Franken—a smart critic of Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson's initial schemes for bailing out Wall Street—to overcome the brutal assault from Coleman and his corporate cronies.

COMMENT

And overcome it he has. After one of the longest Senate recount fights in recent history, the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party contender for the seat once held by his friend Paul Wellstone was certified January 5 by the state canvassing board as the winner—by 225 votes. That's something of a landslide in a contest that saw the margin between Franken and Coleman fall to single digits at points during the two-month review of 3 million ballots. But the fact that Franken has prevailed won't stop the cruder players in a down-on-its-luck Senate Republican caucus and their media mouthpieces from trying to deny Minnesota the senator it has chosen.

Coleman's lawyers, despite multiple setbacks in the courts, claim they have only begun to mount legal challenges—operating, it seems, on the theory that they might yet find a venue as friendly as the *Bush v. Gore* Supreme Court. And Coleman's allies in the Senate are still maneuvering to keep Franken out of the chamber. The ringleader for the denial-of-democracy crowd is Texan John Cornyn, a fierce partisan who is seeking a leg up in his role as chair of the National Republican Senatorial Committee by depressing the Democratic majority in the new Senate. Cornyn announced plans to filibuster any move to seat Franken before every last legal challenge in the contest is resolved, even though Franken has not demanded special treatment.

"This is a very, very serious matter. I can assure you that there will be no way that people on our side of the aisle will agree to seat any senator without a valid certificate," grumbled Cornyn, trying to foster the fantasy that the Democrats were somehow gaming the system. This "messaging" by the man who will manage efforts by Senate Republicans to retake the chamber in 2010 echoed the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page's prevarication that Minnesota's open, transparent and bipartisan recount process has somehow been corrupted by the Franken team. Noting the makeup of the canvassing board, former Minnesota Governor Arne Carlson, a Republican, dismissed the criticisms from the Coleman camp and national GOP operatives, saying, "When you've had two Republican Supreme Court Justices involved in the process, you can't very well come back and say, Gee, I think it's been partisanly tinged."

Cornyn and the *Journal*'s editors and allies are practicing Big Lie politics as the Senate is having a hard enough time organizing itself—a task muddled by Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich's appointment of a replacement for President-elect Obama and by the struggles of other governors to fill the seats of Vice President–elect Joe Biden of Delaware, Secretary of State–designee Hillary Clinton of New York and Interior Secretary–designee Ken Salazar of Colorado. (Cornyn made pronouncements about the Illinois imbroglio, although here he paralleled Senate majority leader Harry Reid's original dis-

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

The Way People Feel About the End of the Bush Administration And the Future of George W. Bush

So when he leaves we won't be keeping track of him.
We're just relieved as hell to see the back of him.

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inclination to seat Blagojevich's choice, Roland Burris.)

In all likelihood Franken will be seated despite Cornyn's machinations. But the Texas senator's signals—and the implicit support he has received from minority leader Mitch McConnell—are unsettling when the chamber is under pressure to move quickly to review and approve Obama's cabinet picks and a near-trillion-dollar economic-stimulus proposal that McConnell has indicated Senate Republicans will challenge. If Cornyn is threatening to abuse the filibuster power—to which the GOP clings by the narrowest of margins (forty-one votes are needed to block Senate deliberations)—in order to vent Republicans' frustration over Franken's victory, the party is starting a difficult Congressional session on an obstructionist footing.

If the Republicans, who have been routed in the past two election cycles, are determined to reject the will of an American electorate that has since 2006 expanded the Senate Democratic Caucus membership from forty-five to fifty-nine, the Democrats had better be ready to play hardball. Reid and his compatriots (including Franken) must push back. If they don't challenge the filibuster privilege outright, then they must at least pressure Republican moderates like Pennsylvania's Arlen Specter and Mainers Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins to cooperate. After all, if Republicans like Cornyn define their party's role as that of obstruction at every turn, this Senate will cease to function when it comes time to chart the new economic and foreign policy courses that voters demanded November 4. JOHN NICHOLS

The Foundation of Change

The national economic crisis and election of Barack Obama create opportunities for progress not seen in decades—but will advocacy groups and foundations seize the moment?

COMMENT

President-elect Obama's election can lead to bold new approaches that put the public interest first. From what we can see in Washington and beyond the Beltway, advocates from all corners of our nation are moving quickly to address concerns that have mounted during the past eight years. The progress they seek, however, will happen only if an engaged base of committed nonprofits and philanthropists push now and pressure decision-makers from the outside.

Already, corporate special interests are spending exorbitant amounts to influence lawmakers and protect their bottom lines. Ultraconservative groups are raising millions of dollars to block progressive goals. Some lawmakers have vowed to filibuster progressive nominees to the executive and judicial branches.

Building grassroots pressure to overcome this opposition will take a strong partnership between nonprofits, foundations and individual donors based on a few key principles:

§ *Think big.* Many of us have internalized the limits imposed by eight years of unrestrained attacks on social progress. We can't be satisfied with pushing for the same policies that were all we could imagine winning under Bush. Our agenda must be rooted in real, lasting solutions to the problems most Americans face, from fundamental healthcare reform to green jobs to education policy that really does leave no child behind. In a previous time of opportunity—the 1960s—the civil rights movement, aided by several foundations, inspired a new generation and transformed the nation by asking not for baby steps but for bold legislation on voting rights and discrimination.

§ *Coordinate.* Most of our major problems are interrelated, and so are the solutions. For example, restoring workers' freedom to choose to have a union can help put more money in families' pockets and address the pay gap and other forms of discrimination. Recognizing its broad impact, a coalition of nonprofit organizations from across the sectors has come together to champion passage of the Employee Free Choice Act. Similarly, to ensure confirmation of judges who share our core constitutional values, organizations from a vast spectrum of interest areas—civil and women's rights, environmental protection and labor—must work together. Nonprofits and foundations cannot focus just on their own issues without coordinating with and supporting a larger movement.

§ *Invest now.* Foundations, individual donors and nonprofits have been hit by the economic crisis—but that just means we have to be smart and strategic about how our resources are used. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that requires us to marshal every resource we have and hold nothing back. We can't afford to look back four or eight years from now and say that maybe we could have accomplished more if only we hadn't been so cautious. Foundations ordinarily give about 5 percent a year. As their endowments shrink, their payouts will also decrease. Given this time of crisis and opportunity, it is crucial that they raise the level of funding to at least the amounts given last year.

§ *Involve advocates with hands-on experience.* Foundations that want to know what advocates need and the strategies that work best in practice should hire people who have walked in those shoes. The more knowledgeable and sophisticated a foundation is about advocacy, the more effective its grantmaking will be.

§ *Make unrestricted, general support grants.* Advocacy opportunities and needs arise at all times and often without warning. Groups on the ground know best how to respond. Donors should support, not hamstring, them.

Some donors argue that their limited dollars need to fund local direct services in order to help the growing numbers of Americans facing hardships caused by the recession, and certainly that kind of assistance is worthy. However, if we don't fight for systemic change and prevent further government cutbacks in vital services, the crisis will only get worse for those living at the margins. Groups that empower working people and the poor will be critical to building lasting strength that won't vanish at the first sign of defeat.

A group of reformers met with Franklin Roosevelt shortly after his first inauguration. They outlined some reforms they wanted. Roosevelt said, "I agree with you. I want to do it. Now make me do it."

I have that quote on my desk. It reminds me that it's not enough to have a good idea. The best glue in the world needs pressure to make it stick. So do ideas about policy. In the first 100 days of the new administration, nonprofits and foundations must move with a new sense of urgency and partnership. This is our time, as Barack Obama often said during the campaign—but only if we act boldly to make it so. NAN ARON

Nan Aron is president of the Alliance for Justice.

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Alexander Cockburn

Bomb a Ghetto, Raise a Cheer

Half drowned in the torrents of supportive speech and prose lavished here and in Europe on Israel's criminal onslaughts on the Palestinian inhabitants of Gaza, one naturally tends to compare and contrast such paeans to those extended to kindred barbarities by Israel in the past. Is the amen chorus louder, softer or more or less the same?

If you stick to highway traffic through the columns and bulletins of the major media, aside from some passable stuff on the cable news shows, the flow of ignorant drivel seems as toxic as ever, maybe worse, since Israel has tried to empty Gaza of all reporters. The Israelis wipe out whole families, phone apartment blocks to terrify the occupants with boasts that their homes will shortly be blown up, and the Israel claque here stresses the consummate humanity of the attackers. Charles Krauthammer in the *Washington Post* celebrates the birth of the new year by extolling Israel for being "so scrupulous about civilian life." Professor Alan Dershowitz dishes out congratulation for Israel's "perfectly proportionate" onslaught.

My mind goes back to Martin Peretz in 1982 inscribing in *The New Republic* glowing sermons on the doctrines of humanity instilled in the IDF, words written not long before Israeli generals gave the green light for the killers of the Phalange to go to work, disemboweling women in the camps under the indifferent or admiring gaze of IDF personnel.

Bomb ghettos and civilians die. I write as news comes that Israeli gunners have managed to shell and kill nearly fifty Palestinians, including women and children, fleeing a UN-run school in Gaza. I can guarantee that Israeli claims about Hamas's use of that school are already on the wires. Since no one is going to quiz him on the matter of bombing civilians, let me quote Hamas leader Khaled Meshal on this issue in a response to Alya Rea of *CounterPunch* and me in Damascus last May. The interview appears in the latest *CounterPunch* newsletter:

Rea: "My question is about using violent means. When people use violent means, inevitably innocent people suffer, children, not only on the Palestinian side, but Israeli children too. What do you think?"

Meshal: "Unfortunately the insistence on violent repression by our assailants leads to innocent blood on the street. Since 1996, 12 years ago, we have proposed to exclude civilian targets from the conflict on both sides. Israel did not respond to that. When Israel insists on killing our kids, our elders and senior citizens and women, and bombarding houses with the gunships, F16s and Apaches, when Israel continues these attacks, what is left for the Palestinians to do? They are defending themselves with whatever they have. Our [Qassam] missiles and rockets are very crude. Hence we fire them, within their own capabilities, in reaction to Israeli atrocities. If we had smart missiles—and we wish that some countries could give us these—rest assured that we will never aim at anything except the military targets."

You say it's ludicrous to allow Meshal such self-exculpation? No more ludicrous, in fact far less so, than endlessly citing Israeli generals about the essential humanity of their enterprises, since Meshal confesses to the crudity of the Qassams, whereas the Israelis ladle out bosh about the "sophistication" and accuracy of their fusillades. Of course, the guaranteed lethal inaccuracy of all bombing and shelling in populated areas ensures that you end up with some horror like Qana in 1996 (Operation Grapes of Wrath, launched by Shimon Peres before an election), where Israeli artillerymen killed more than 100 refugees, including many women and children, in the compound of a UN peacekeeping force. In that instance the response of apologists for Israel was to claim that Hezbollah had staged the whole thing and planted the bodies there.

I suppose we should be thankful that Obama initially declined all comment on Israel's attacks. "No comment" is probably better than the likely alternative: full-throated applause, à la Bush, for Israel. Then the carnage at the UN school moved Obama to break his silence, saying, "The loss of civilian life in Gaza and Israel is a source of deep concern for me." The fact that Gaza comes first in that sentence will no doubt prompt some angry columns claiming that Obama is tilting toward the Palestinians. Of course, his consistent groveling to the Israel lobby has been widely noted.

But if the elites are as solidly part of the amen chorus as they have been down the decades, once you leave the corporate and political highways and get on the side roads of the Internet, the picture is changing. The precipitous decline of the Old Information Order is marked in the shift in opinion, noted in a December 31 Rasmussen poll showing that while Americans remain overwhelmingly supportive of Israel, they are split almost evenly on the question of whether Israel should attack Gaza—44 percent in favor of the assault and 41 percent against it. The same poll showed that in contrast to solid Republican cheers, only 31 percent of Democrats are supportive of Israel's attack, unlike their elected representatives. On Obama's "Change" website there has been pressure from the Democratic base for Obama to condemn Israel's attacks.

That's a faint ray of hope. Otherwise, it's a bleak panorama. Israel's long-term drive to leave Palestinians a few patches of ground in a balkanized West Bank continues with no serious international challenge, as does its determination never to accept Hamas—the democratically elected Palestinian government—as a negotiating partner. Why do so if you have the United States behind you and can haul Abbas out of his kennel whenever necessary? What alternative does Hamas have but the rockets? I imagine that Israel's intransigence means the suicide bombers will soon be put to work again. ■

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Katha Pollitt

Caroline and Me

Caroline Kennedy would like to be a senator. I don't blame her. So would I! Especially if Governor Paterson could just waft me into office, and I didn't have to, um, you know, campaign. I'll bet some parts of the job are really fun, and it's public service, which is so uplifting. You think I'm joking, but every argument that has been advanced for Kennedy is just as true for me. She's a mother, a writer, a person with no electoral experience or, so far as we know, longstanding interest in acquiring any—me too! She has more kids; I've written more books—I'd say it averages out.

In her column in *The New York Times Magazine*, Lisa Belkin argues that it's sexist to write off mothers who have opted out of the standard male-defined career path and want to come back into the workforce in midlife: it's not like those women have been twiddling their thumbs. They just don't have a traditional ten-single-spaced-page résumé of directly related paid employment, like (Belkin's zinger) "playing for the NBA or the NFL or starring on 'The Love Boat.'" Quite right: besides the books and the children, Kennedy has a law degree, she's sat on worthy boards, raised money for the New York City public schools and (although, oddly, Belkin doesn't mention this) she served, apparently quite effectively, on Obama's vice presidential search committee. "Take away the part about her father the president and her uncles the senators, ignore for the moment her Park Avenue address, peel away the talk of the dangers of dynasty and the power of privilege, don't even touch the question of whether anyone would be picking apart her credentials if it were a male Kennedy who was under consideration—and what is at the core of all this shouting is what, nowadays, counts as experience." Exactly. Take away all that, and what have you got? Someone as fit to be in the Senate as me. My relatives are also pretty great, if you want to know, and furthermore raise no awkward dynastic issues, being rooted in the meat business and the less profitable parts of the legal profession. I would be the very first senator in the history of the Pollitt and Levine clans. And as for opting out—I am so opted out, the high point of one recent week was catching the rarely rerun Stephen Colbert episode on *Law & Order*.

I really don't see how Governor Paterson can resist me. He is, by all accounts, a reasonable man, able, as Belkin advises, to set aside irrelevant stuff like Kennedy's family, wealth, reluctance to reveal her finances, fondness for verbalized pauses, apparent diffidence and lifelong lack of zeal for politics. Her cousin Kerry Kennedy said on *Hardball* that she didn't know Caroline's position on abortion (she's prochoice) because they had never discussed it. If true, those two have indeed led a charmed life, and so has everyone they know, because, besides abortion being one of the most-discussed issues of our lifetime, unwanted pregnancy is one of the things life tends to throw at women, and women do talk about it among themselves. It's good to know that Kennedy is prochoice, but as with many other of her stated positions—opposition to the Iraq War, support for labor law reform and fair trade—we have no idea how firmly she holds these views or how much she cares about them. That would definitely not be a problem with me: it's all laid out in print.

OK, forget me, but if the governor is going to appoint a private citizen of the female gender—and I hope he will because it is just ridiculous that only sixteen senators are women—it is hard to believe Caroline Kennedy is the most gifted, energetic, focused, can-do woman around. New York is full of brilliant, accomplished women—Judith Kaye! Gail Collins! Rachel Maddow! In fact, there are so many fabulous amateurs, maybe he should just go with a professional. What about former Congresswoman Elizabeth Holtzman, noted civil libertarian and scourge of the Bush administration? Or Representative Carolyn Maloney? She's got experience—not that we care about that—she's a liberal, NOW and Feminist Majority are backing her, and moving her to the Senate would free up her district, which just happens to be where Caroline Kennedy has that irrelevant Park Avenue residence, so Kennedy can run for her seat and get into office the old-fashioned way. After all, people mocked Hillary Clinton as a princessy dilettante when she ran for the Senate in 2000. But she showed *them*. She didn't need Maureen Dowd–like appeals to the "magic" of her name. She just went out and got more votes than her opponent. In a democracy, that's the way to opt back in.

Turning to Illinois, another state where a governor is bestowing a Senate seat—*aka* "a #%$&#! golden thing"—there's good news. Actually, great news. Tom Geoghegan is running for Rahm Emanuel's Congressional seat. Tom (I'm using his first name because I know him a bit) is a labor lawyer with thirty years of experience (yes, I know, that word) and a writer of considerable genius—*Which Side Are You On?* may be the best book ever about the decline of organized labor. He's a true progressive, honest, prochoice and pro–gay marriage, and if elected he would push, knowledgeably and aggressively, for all the right, important things. When I spoke with him for this column, he told me he had four main goals: single-payer health insurance ("If we have to move to it in stages, let's do that"), an expanded and universal pension system, a cap on interest rates and government action to make sure wages go up in line with productivity. "The meltdown has opened up possibilities," he told me. "It's time to run on a platform of making changes in our economic system. If we're ever going to make it fairer and more just for working people, it's now—or never." Sick of timorous, dithering Democrats? Tom could be the next Paul Wellstone.

In a crowded primary field—there may be as many as twenty people running—Geoghegan has a good chance if he gets union and progressive support. That's where you come in. Read all about his campaign at geogheganforcongress.com. Use the donate button there, or mail a check to Geoghegan for Congress, PO Box 1145, Chicago, IL 60690. ■

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Naomi Klein

Israel: Boycott, Divest, Sanction

It's time. Long past time. The best strategy to end the increasingly bloody occupation is for Israel to become the target of the kind of global movement that put an end to apartheid in South Africa.

In July 2005 a huge coalition of Palestinian groups laid out plans to do just that. They called on "people of conscience all over the world to impose broad boycotts and implement divestment initiatives against Israel similar to those applied to South Africa in the apartheid era." The campaign Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions—BDS for short—was born.

Every day that Israel pounds Gaza brings more converts to the BDS cause, and talk of cease-fires is doing little to slow the momentum. Support is even emerging among Israeli Jews. In the midst of the assault roughly 500 Israelis, dozens of them well-known artists and scholars, sent a letter to foreign ambassadors stationed in Israel. It calls for "the adoption of immediate restrictive measures and sanctions" and draws a clear parallel with the antiapartheid struggle. "The boycott on South Africa was effective, but Israel is handled with kid gloves.... This international backing must stop."

Yet many still can't go there. The reasons are complex, emotional and understandable. And they simply aren't good enough. Economic sanctions are the most effective tools in the nonviolent arsenal. Surrendering them verges on active complicity. Here are the top four objections to the BDS strategy, followed by counterarguments.

1. Punitive measures will alienate rather than persuade Israelis. The world has tried what used to be called "constructive engagement." It has failed utterly. Since 2006 Israel has been steadily escalating its criminality: expanding settlements, launching an outrageous war against Lebanon and imposing collective punishment on Gaza through the brutal blockade. Despite this escalation, Israel has not faced punitive measures—quite the opposite. The weapons and $3 billion in annual aid that the US sends to Israel is only the beginning. Throughout this key period, Israel has enjoyed a dramatic improvement in its diplomatic, cultural and trade relations with a variety of other allies. For instance, in 2007 Israel became the first non–Latin American country to sign a free-trade deal with Mercosur. In the first nine months of 2008, Israeli exports to Canada went up 45 percent. A new trade deal with the European Union is set to double Israel's exports of processed food. And on December 8, European ministers "upgraded" the EU-Israel Association Agreement, a reward long sought by Jerusalem.

It is in this context that Israeli leaders started their latest war: confident they would face no meaningful costs. It is remarkable that over seven days of wartime trading, the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange's flagship index actually went up 10.7 percent. When carrots don't work, sticks are needed.

2. Israel is not South Africa. Of course it isn't. The relevance of the South African model is that it proves that BDS tactics can be effective when weaker measures (protests, petitions, back-room lobbying) have failed. And there are indeed deeply distressing echoes: the color-coded IDs and travel permits, the bulldozed homes and forced displacement, the settler-only roads. Ronnie Kasrils, a prominent South African politician, said that the architecture of segregation that he saw in the West Bank and Gaza in 2007 was "infinitely worse than apartheid."

3. Why single out Israel when the United States, Britain and other Western countries do the same things in Iraq and Afghanistan? Boycott is not a dogma; it is a tactic. The reason the BDS strategy should be tried against Israel is practical: in a country so small and trade-dependent, it could actually work.

4. Boycotts sever communication; we need more dialogue, not less. This one I'll answer with a personal story. For eight years, my books have been published in Israel by a commercial house called Babel. But when I published *The Shock Doctrine*, I wanted to respect the boycott. On the advice of BDS activists, I contacted a small publisher called Andalus. Andalus is an activist press, deeply involved in the anti-occupation movement and the only Israeli publisher devoted exclusively to translating Arabic writing into Hebrew. We drafted a contract that guarantees that all proceeds go to Andalus's work, and none to me. In other words, I am boycotting the Israeli economy but not Israelis.

Coming up with this plan required dozens of phone calls, e-mails and instant messages, stretching from Tel Aviv to Ramallah to Paris to Toronto to Gaza City. My point is this: as soon as you start implementing a boycott strategy, dialogue increases dramatically. And why wouldn't it? Building a movement requires endless communicating, as many in the antiapartheid struggle well recall. The argument that supporting boycotts will cut us off from one another is particularly specious given the array of cheap information technologies at our fingertips. We are drowning in ways to rant at one another across national boundaries. No boycott can stop us.

Just about now, many a proud Zionist is gearing up for major point-scoring: don't I know that many of those very high-tech toys come from Israeli research parks, world leaders in infotech? True enough, but not all of them. Several days into Israel's Gaza assault, Richard Ramsey, the managing director of a British telecom company, sent an e-mail to the Israeli tech firm MobileMax. "As a result of the Israeli government action in the last few days we will no longer be in a position to consider doing business with yourself or any other Israeli company."

When contacted by *The Nation*, Ramsey said his decision wasn't political. "We can't afford to lose any of our clients, so it was purely commercially defensive."

It was this kind of cold business calculation that led many companies to pull out of South Africa two decades ago. And it's precisely the kind of calculation that is our most realistic hope of bringing justice, so long denied, to Palestine. ■

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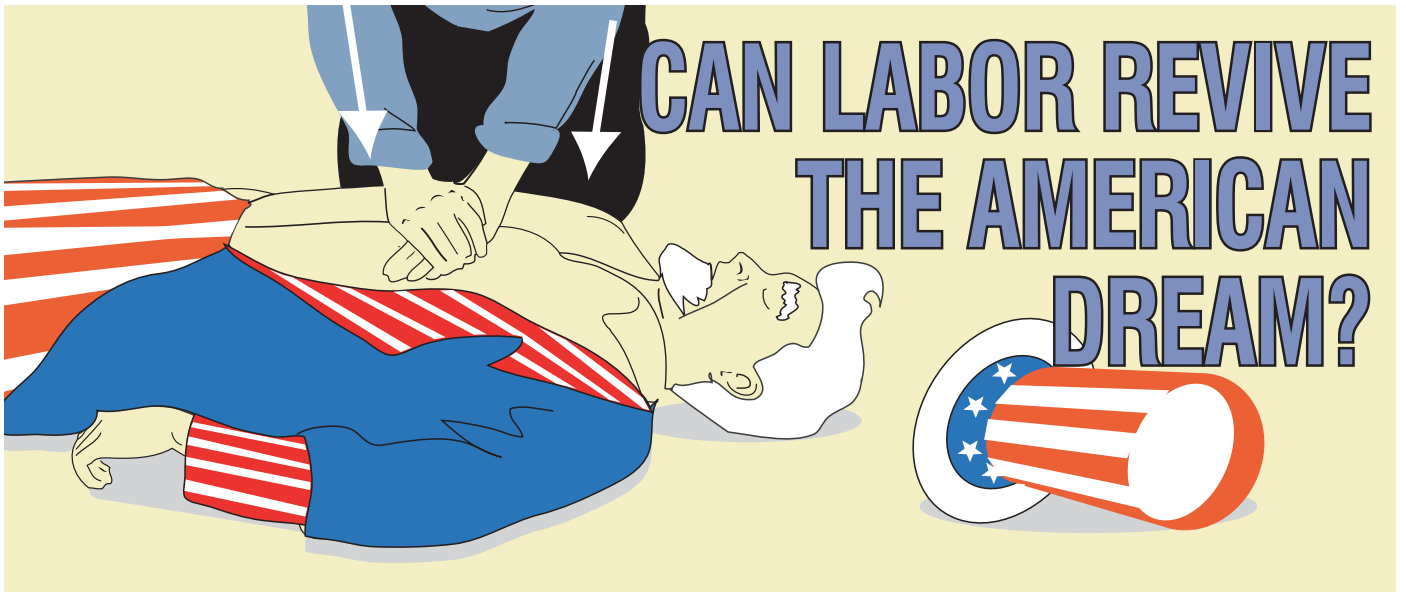

CAN LABOR REVIVE THE AMERICAN DREAM?

The business lobby declares war on Employee Free Choice—and on struggling workers.

by ESTHER KAPLAN

The financial markets are in tatters, consumer spending is anemic and the recession continues to deepen, but corporate America is keeping its eyes on the prize: crushing organized labor. The Center for Union Facts, a business front group, has taken out full-page ads in newspapers linking SEIU president Andy Stern to the Rod Blagojevich scandal. The Chamber of Commerce is capitalizing on the debate over the Big Three bailout to claim that "unions drove the auto companies off the cliff," while minority leader Mitch McConnell and other Republican senators insist on steep wage cuts. A December 10 Republican strategy memo revealed their central obsession: "Republicans should stand firm and take their first shot against organized labor," the memo read. "This is a precursor to card check"—a clear reference to the Employee Free Choice Act.

This simple amendment to federal labor law, which would, among other things, allow workers to unionize when a majority sign cards rather than requiring a bruising election, has galvanized the business community in a way even the $700 billion bailout couldn't. "I get the sense that this is more important to them than even taxes or regulation," says the AFL-CIO's director of government affairs, Bill Samuels. "This is about power. And the business community is not going to give up power willingly." Wal-Mart CEO Lee Scott said as much to a meeting with analysts in October. "We like driving the car," he told them, "and we're not going to give the steering wheel to anybody but us."

In the lead-up to the election, the co-founder of Home Depot, Bernie Marcus, called Employee Free Choice "the demise of civilization." Wal-Mart summoned store managers into mandatory meetings to warn them against it. Industrial launderer Cintas launched a website to oppose it. The retail industry associations paid blue-chip lobbying firms to block it. The Chamber of Commerce hired Bush Labor Secretary Elaine Chao's chief of staff to run its opposition campaign, which trashed the bill as antidemocratic because it allows workers to bypass a formal election. Business groups spent tens of millions on ads attacking Democrats in tight Senate races, including $5 million targeting challenger Jeff Merkley of Oregon, a supporter of the bill who was smeared with a mailer accusing him of doing the bidding of corrupt labor leaders and trailed at every campaign appearance by a grim reaper claiming "Merkley kills democracy." "I've never seen anything like it," says Merkley's campaign manager, John Isaac, "where a group spent so much money to insert their issue into a campaign."

At first glance, Employee Free Choice looks like little more than a technical fix. In addition to allowing unionizing through majority sign-up, it stiffens penalties for intimidating or firing union supporters and imposes arbitration when a company refuses to bargain a first contract. But as the leading corporate lobbies recognize, the bill could have far-reaching effects. By reviving unions, it could push up wages, realigning the broken economy so that company profits are spread beyond CEOs. It could help rein in corporate power and, perhaps most threatening to a business community that has enjoyed decades of deregulation, sustain a progressive majority in Washington in the years to come. If progressives aren't doing the math, conservatives are. "Unions don't spend money to elect Republicans," Senator John Ensign told a group of executives this past fall. "They spend money to elect Democrats. From our perspective, this would have devastating consequences."

Throughout his run for president, Obama was explicit in his support for Employee Free Choice and his understanding of the forces arrayed against it. "If a majority of workers want a union, they should get a union; it's that simple," he told union members in Pennsylvania in April. "Let's stand up to the business lobby." Since his election, he's sent other friendly signals: supporting a factory takeover by pink-slipped glass workers in Chicago and tapping Representative Hilda Solis as labor secre-

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tary. While her predecessor stacked the labor department with experienced unionbusters and gutted regulations and workplace safety inspections, Solis has been a regular on Los Angeles picket lines and pushed a minimum-wage hike into law as a state legislator. Significantly, she made an impassioned plea from the House floor for the Employee Free Choice Act.

But the business lobby Obama once railed against is now giving him a taste of its wares. The Chamber denounced the bill in op-eds as "payback" to "union bosses" that would signal the end of "workplace democracy" and the advent of "Soviet-style thuggery." All the big industry associations called press conferences to declare war. "This will be Armageddon," one top Chamber official said of the battle ahead. Another pointedly warned Obama against "picking a fight right away on a major, titanic clash." Obama's advisers got the memo. At a November gathering of CEOs, Rahm Emanuel refused to answer a question about the bill, and that same month economic adviser Jennifer Granholm called it "divisive." Obama recently restated his commitment to ending the "barriers and roadblocks" to unionization but avoided any reference to the bill itself. "The Chamber is fanning the flames on this, saying this is the epic battle between labor and business," says a key strategist working to pass the measure, "and it scares the shit out of the Obama people and some of the Democrats."

For a snapshot of how current labor law works, you could do worse than to travel to McComb, Ohio, a small town a half-hour south of Toledo, where, one Wednesday in early December, Bill Lawhorn showed up for his job as a forklift operator for the first time in six years. He and six other workers were fired in 2002 after leading a campaign to unionize Consolidated Biscuit, a massive industrial bakery in McComb that produces popular snacks for Nabisco such as Oreos, Nutter Butters and Ritz crackers. The workers started out with "a fire in their belly," recalls an organizer from the bakery and confectionary workers union, with more than 650 of 800 signing cards of interest. But after Consolidated Biscuit hired a unionbusting firm and started threatening workers with firings or deportations or shuttering the plant altogether, the union lost the election. In 2004 an administrative law judge found the threats and firings to be illegal, but the company appealed to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) and then to a circuit court. It wasn't until mid-November that Consolidated Biscuit was finally forced to bring Lawhorn back and allow a fresh vote.

Consolidated Biscuit is one of the few big employers in northwest Ohio, and after eleven years earning around $12.50 an hour there, Lawhorn was stuck hunting for work in a region where jobs are scarce. He estimates that he applied for more than a hundred, including security guard positions paying only $7 an hour, but he says he never got a single call. Eventually he borrowed money from his kids to buy a truck to haul garbage for his neighbors, which brought in a little extra cash until gas prices got too high. He and his wife skated along on her wages from a retail distribution center, but then she developed heart trouble and ended up out of work herself. "Times really, really got hard," he says. "I'm 52 years old. At 52, you shouldn't borrow from your children; you should loan to them. You shouldn't wonder how do you buy your grandchildren a Christmas present." Though Lawhorn received a paycheck in time for Christmas last year, Consolidated Biscuit is still contesting the order to give him back pay.

At least Lawhorn got his job back; one of his fired coworkers died before the case was resolved. Nationwide, some 86,000 workers have been fired over the past eight years for trying to unionize (countless others have been threatened), and only a fraction of these get reinstated by the NLRB. So Lawhorn's return to the forklift is what passes for a victory these days, under the shredded protections of the 1935 National Labor Relations Act, whose intent was not merely to protect the right to collective bargaining but to "encourag[e] the practice."

With Employee Free Choice in effect, Consolidated Biscuit workers would have had a union since May 2002, when a majority first signed cards.

That, says Cornell University's Kate Bronfenbrenner, is long gone. According to her research, employers fire workers in a quarter of all campaigns, threaten workers with plant closings or outsourcing in half and employ mandatory one-on-one meetings where workers are threatened with job loss in two-thirds. All of these tactics are illegal. Unions, meanwhile, are consigned to getting out their message off the clock and off the premises. "The fact that our labor law has no penalties for employer violations, no punitive damages, no financial penalties, that the worst thing that happens to employers when they commit egregious violations is a slap on the wrist, has emboldened employers to break the law at an extreme that is really astonishing," says Bronfenbrenner.

The crisis is so deep that in a rising number of campaigns, unions have abandoned board-certified elections altogether, instead using public pressure to secure union recognition from employers when a majority of workers sign cards. Over the past decade, the number of election petitions has fallen by 41 percent. Take the Communications Workers of America: within a year and a half of pressuring management at Cingular (now AT&T) to recognize card check, CWA had organized 30,000 new members. But CWA recently lost three elections in a row at Comcast worksites, despite enjoying majority support—the result of antiunion threats from Comcast. With Employee Free Choice in place, CWA could have used card check even with this sort of intransigent employer.

Likewise, with Employee Free Choice in effect, Consolidated Biscuit workers would have had a union since May 2002, when a majority first signed cards. With the threat of arbitration, a contract would have been signed before the end of the year, likely boosting pay to $20 an hour. And the penalty for firings may have been stiff enough—triple back pay plus penalties—that Lawhorn and the others might never have lost their jobs.

Esther Kaplan is investigative editor at The Nation Institute. Research assistance for this article was provided by Sarah Arnold and Lucas Mann.

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What would its passage unleash now? Though union membership has slid to 12 percent in recent decades, the desire to unionize has grown—from 30 percent of nonunion workers in the mid-1980s to 53 percent of them now. "Look, the bill will not stop corporate unionbusting," says the AFL-CIO's head of strategic research, Kenneth Zinn, "but it will level the playing field for workers to join a union." If the bill passes, says Change to Win campaign director Bob Callahan, his federation's unions—including the Service Employees, Teamsters, and Food and Commercial Workers—are poised to organize on a massive scale. He predicts 5 million new members in the first eighteen months after passage—meaning, he says, 5 million workers winning a double-digit raise, nearly a million of them lifted out of poverty. Zinn imagines whole industries, and even the "right to work" South, possibly opening up to unionization.

With the concentration of wealth approaching 1929 levels, there is a forceful case to be made that unionization holds the best chance for a reversal. Corporate profits have doubled since 2001, while real wages have flatlined and the number of workers earning poverty wages has risen to nearly a quarter of the workforce. Unionized workers earn between 15 and 28 percent more than their nonunion counterparts and receive far better health and retirement benefits, and when unions reach a high enough density in a particular industry, wages in nonunion shops tend to rise to meet the new standard.

A line tracing the rise of wealth inequality and one tracing the decline in unionization make a perfect mirror image.

But unionization rates have been crashing for decades. "Historically, unionization basically created the middle class," says economist James Galbraith. "First, by its direct effect on the wages and benefits of unionized workers; second, by its indirect effect on the wages of workers who weren't unionized; and third, by the impact unions had on the creation of the social institutions that underpin the middle class, such as Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid—the very structures of the New Deal and the Great Society." A line tracing the rise of wealth inequality and one tracing the decline in unionization make a perfect mirror image of each other.

The business community's massive campaign this past fall to defeat candidates who supported Employee Free Choice focused on the misbegotten claim that the legislation would take away workers' right to choose a union by secret ballot election. Actually, labor law allows either a secret ballot or majority sign-up, at the discretion of the employer; the bill would simply put that choice in the hands of the workers. Still, the Chamber, betting on its trumped-up prodemocracy message, dumped millions of dollars on ads with this message in nine battleground states, some using a *Sopranos* actor to play the union tough who just might kneecap you if you vote no. Interestingly, the gambit failed. Voters in these states told pollsters that secret ballot in union elections ranked last on their list of concerns; many more said they were troubled by the excessive power of big corporations than said they were troubled by the power of big labor.

Since the election, the business community has savvily retooled its campaign. In a November 21 letter to Congress, the Chamber wrote that passage of the bill "would have a particularly devastating impact on small employers who, as the primary source for new jobs, would be counted on to reverse the current economic downturn." The bill, the letter went on, "is an awful idea in good economic times and a catastrophic idea in the difficult economic times now upon us." Days later, the Chamber presented new research claiming that unionization is a drag on GDP—an assertion that Galbraith and other economists find laughable. And the Chamber used negotiations over the auto bailout to claim that unionization bankrupted the industry. In fact, labor makes up a tiny portion of a car's production cost, but in a tense economic environment with spiking unemployment, such talking points easily gained traction in the media.

If the rhetoric doesn't work, the business lobby is ready to threaten retaliation. "They'll promise to dump money to oppose supporters of the bill in the next election," says Mary Beth Maxwell, director of the pro-union American Rights at Work. The Chamber of Commerce has been aggressively educating its local chapters so that business leaders can buttonhole senators in their home districts. When Arkansas Senator Blanche Lincoln, a Democrat who counts Wal-Mart among her top donors, met with the Little Rock Chamber of Commerce in late November, she tried to talk about healthcare and the economy, but the businessmen in the room hammered her on Employee Free Choice. A Rove disciple, former US Attorney Tim Griffin, publicly mulled over a run against her if she repeats her 2007 yes vote. Weeks later, the senator hedged her bets, saying the reform is perhaps "not necessary." "We have the most ideological business community in the world," says economist Larry Mishel, president of the Economic Policy Institute, "and they enforce it."

According to the AFL-CIO's Samuels, "We're seeing heavy pressure from the retail world, the chain drugstores, Wal-Mart, the retail federation, the nonunion building contractors and some of the low-wage employers like Tyson's, the ones who have spent twenty years trying to create a business climate that isn't friendly toward unions, and from the several-billion-dollar-industry of antiunion consultants." Wal-Mart, he says, is at the top of that list. "They're flying their forces into DC already." Wal-Mart sent a shot across the bow in October, when the company shuttered an auto shop in Quebec within days of the workers there voting to organize. "It will be very tight in the Senate," says one Democratic Congressional aide. "We're not kidding ourselves."

One of the many ironies here is that the Employee Free Choice Act already has majority support—the bill just needs to get a vote on the Senate floor. In 2007 the bill passed overwhelmingly in the House and garnered fifty-one votes in the Senate, but when Democrats failed to achieve a filibuster-proof majority, the business press was quick to assert that this put "a question mark" over labor law reform. The real question, says SEIU president Stern, is, "Are we willing to say if we can't get sixty votes we won't fight? We will lose as progressives if we

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concede that idea." Other union leaders worry privately that the bill can't be won intact, that the increased penalties for worker intimidation might face better odds on their own. Representative George Miller, chair of the House Education and Labor Committee, insists that it can. "We had the same opposition last year [2007], and the members understand the issue pretty clearly," he says. "You're either going to give the middle class the tools so they can hold on to their economic livelihood or you're not. It's a very important priority for me."

SEIU has committed 50 percent of its staff to a field campaign in support of Employee Free Choice and national healthcare and expects each local to commit 30 percent of its staff as well. Secretary-treasurer Anna Burger says the union will be in fourteen states with an ambitious "field, phone, air, town-hall-meeting press strategy. We're going to tie that to a Hill strategy as well so they never lose sight of us, and we never lose sight of them, until we get this done. And if they don't vote with us, they need to be clear about what's going to happen to them. People up for re-election should experience some of our ground operation now." Kenneth Zinn says the AFL-CIO will be active in eighteen states, continuing the record-breaking ground operation it put in place for the 2008 election. It is also raising $30 million for a media campaign. Altogether, says Bob Callahan of Change to Win, the two labor federations will have several thousand people on the ground full time to fight for the bill. "Labor has done an incredible job of staying focused on this as a top priority," says Mary Beth Maxwell, "and allies have really stepped up and realized this is more than just labor's fight."

As UC Santa Barbara labor historian Nelson Lichtenstein points out, the New Deal was not just a series of reforms that stabilized banking or stimulated the economy. "Those reforms," he says, "were backstopped by the organization of the working class, and those reforms continued for two generations." Any Obama-era reforms, he adds, "can and will dissipate" unless unions form an institutional bulwark against retreat.

Fred Feinstein, a former counsel to the NLRB during the Clinton years, was a Congressional aide in the late '70s, the last time Democrats, in control on Capitol Hill, made a full-court press to pass labor law reform. They failed to achieve cloture in the Senate by a single vote. Then, unions were more than twice their current size and less allied with progressive causes, and so it was easier to frame the battle as a parochial fight between big labor and big business. "Labor's decline helps recast that dynamic," he says. "This time around it isn't about two special interests; it's about economic recovery and restoring the middle class." ■

Our Lincoln

He was a politician whose greatness lay in his capacity for growth.

by ERIC FONER

Abraham Lincoln has always provided a lens through which Americans examine themselves. He has been described as a consummate moralist and a shrewd political operator, a lifelong foe of slavery and an inveterate racist. Politicians from conservatives to communists, civil rights activists to segregationists, have claimed him as their own. With the approach of the bicentennial of his birth, the past few years have seen an outpouring of books on Lincoln of every size, shape and description. His psychology, marriage, law career, political practices, racial attitudes and every one of his major speeches have been subjected to minute examination.

Lincoln is important to us not because of his melancholia or how he chose his cabinet but because of his role in the vast human drama of emancipation and what his life tells us about slavery's enduring legacy. *The Nation*, founded by veterans of the struggle for abolition three months after Lincoln's death, dedicated itself to completing the unfinished task of making the former slaves equal citizens. It soon abandoned this goal, but in the twentieth century again took up the banner of racial justice. Who is *our* Lincoln?

In the wake of the 2008 election and on the eve of an inaugural address with "a new birth of freedom," a phrase borrowed from the Gettysburg Address, as its theme, the Lincoln we should remember is the politician whose greatness lay in his capacity for growth. Much of that growth stemmed from his complex relationship with the radicals of his day, black and white abolitionists who fought against overwhelming odds to bring the moral issue of slavery to the forefront of national life.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Until well into the Civil War, Lincoln was not an advocate of immediate abolition. But he was well aware of the abolitionists' significance in creating public sentiment hostile to slavery. Every schoolboy, Lincoln noted in 1858, recognized the names of William Wilberforce and Granville Sharpe, leaders of the

Eric Foner is DeWitt Clinton Professor of History at Columbia University and editor of the recently published essay collection Our Lincoln *(Norton).*

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earlier struggle to outlaw the Atlantic slave trade, "but who can now name a single man who labored to retard it?" On issue after issue—abolition in the nation's capital, wartime emancipation, enlisting black soldiers, amending the Constitution to abolish slavery, allowing some blacks to vote—Lincoln came to occupy positions the abolitionists had first staked out. The destruction of slavery during the war offers an example, as relevant today as in Lincoln's time, of how the combination of an engaged social movement and an enlightened leader can produce progressive social change.

Unlike the abolitionists, most of whom sought to influence the political system from outside, for nearly his entire adult life Lincoln was a politician. He first ran for the Illinois Legislature at 23. Although he spoke occasionally about slavery during his early career, Lincoln did not elaborate his views until the 1850s, when he emerged as a major spokesman for the newly created Republican Party, committed to halting slavery's westward expansion. Like Barack Obama, Lincoln came to national prominence through oratory, not a record of significant accomplishment in office. In speeches of eloquence and power, Lincoln condemned slavery as a violation of the founding principles of the United States as enunciated in the Declaration of Independence—the affirmation of human equality and of the natural right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

"I have always hated slavery," Lincoln once declared, "I think as much as any abolitionist." He spoke of slavery as a "monstrous injustice," a cancer that threatened the lifeblood of the American nation. But he did not share the abolitionist conviction that the moral issue of slavery overrode all others. William Lloyd Garrison burned a copy of the Constitution because of its clauses protecting slavery. But Lincoln, as he explained in a letter to his Kentucky friend Joshua Speed, was willing to "crucify [his] feelings" out of "loyalty to the Constitution and the Union."

Like many of his contemporaries, Lincoln believed the United States embodied the principles of democracy and self-government and should help to spread them throughout the world. This, of course, was the theme of the Gettysburg Address. He was not, to be sure, a believer in Manifest Destiny—the idea that Americans had a God-given right to acquire new territory in the name of liberty, regardless of the desires of the territory's actual inhabitants. Lincoln saw American democracy as an example to the rest of the world, not something to be imposed by unilateral force. Slavery interfered with the fulfillment of this historic mission: it "deprives our republican example of its just influence in the world—enables the enemies of free institutions, with plausibility, to taunt us as hypocrites—causes the real friends of freedom to doubt our sincerity." Yet, for the United States to serve as a beacon of democracy, the nation's unity must be maintained, even if this meant compromising with slavery.

Another key difference between Lincoln and abolitionists lay in their views regarding race. Abolitionists insisted that once freed, slaves should be recognized as equal members of the Republic. They viewed the struggles against slavery and racism as intimately connected. Lincoln saw them as distinct. Unlike his Democratic opponents in the North and pro-slavery advocates in the South, Lincoln claimed for blacks the natural rights enumerated in the Declaration of Independence. But, he insisted, these did not necessarily carry with them civil, political or social equality. Persistently charged with belief in "Negro equality" during his campaign for the Senate against Stephen Douglas in 1858, Lincoln responded that he was not, "nor ever have been, in favor of making voters or jurors of Negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people." Abolitionists worked tirelessly to repeal Northern laws that relegated blacks to second-class citizenship. Lincoln refused to condemn the notorious Black Laws of Illinois, which made it a crime for black people to enter the state.

Throughout the 1850s and for the first half of the Civil War, Lincoln believed that "colonization"—that is, encouraging black people to emigrate to a new homeland in Africa, the Caribbean or Central America—ought to accompany the end of slavery. We sometimes forget how widespread the belief in colonization was in the pre–Civil War era. Henry Clay and Thomas Jefferson, the statesmen most revered by Lincoln, outlined plans to accomplish it. Colonization allowed its proponents to think about the end of slavery without confronting the question of the place of blacks in a post-emancipation society. Some colonizationists spoke of the "degradation" of free blacks and insisted that multiplying their numbers would pose a danger to American society. Others, like Lincoln, emphasized the strength of white racism. Because of it, he said several times, blacks could never achieve equality in the United States. They should remove themselves to a homeland where they could fully enjoy freedom and self-government.

Lincoln shared many of the prejudices of his era, but he insisted on a principle that transcended race—the equal right to the fruit of one's labor.

Colonization was bitterly opposed by most blacks in the North, and, after 1830, by most white abolitionists. They offered an alternative vision of America as a biracial society of equals. Through the attack on colonization, the modern idea of equality as something that knows no racial boundaries was born. At the time of his election as president, however, Lincoln was typical of the majority of Northerners, who were willing to go to war over slavery's expansion yet thought of America as essentially a country for white people.

Lincoln shared many of the prevailing prejudices of his era. But, he insisted, there was a bedrock principle of equality that transcended race—the equal right to the fruits of one's labor. There are many grounds for condemning the institution of slavery: moral, religious, political, economic. Lincoln referred to all of them at one time or another. But ultimately he saw slavery as a form of theft, of one person appropriating the labor of another. Using a black woman as an illustration, he explained the kind of equality in which he believed: "In some respects she certainly is not my equal; but in her natural right to eat the bread she earns with her own hands without asking leave of any one else, she is my equal, and the equal of all others."

Shortly before the 1860 election, Frederick Douglass offered

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a succinct summary of the dilemma confronting opponents of slavery like Lincoln, who worked within the political system rather than outside it. Abstractly, Douglass wrote, most Northerners would agree that slavery was wrong. The challenge was to find a way of "translating antislavery sentiment into antislavery action." The Constitution barred interference with slavery in the states where it already existed. For Lincoln, as for most Republicans, antislavery action meant not attacking slavery where it was but working to prevent slavery's westward expansion.

Lincoln, however, did talk about a future without slavery. The aim of the Republican Party, he insisted, was to put the institution on the road to "ultimate extinction," a phrase he borrowed from Henry Clay. Ultimate extinction could take a long time: Lincoln once said that slavery might survive for another hundred years. But to the South, Lincoln seemed as dangerous as an abolitionist, because he was committed to the eventual end of slavery. This was why his election in 1860 led inexorably to secession and civil war.

In his Second Inaugural, Lincoln asked Americans to confront unblinkingly the legacy of bondage and to think about the requirements of justice.

The war did not begin as a crusade to abolish slavery. Almost from the start, however, abolitionists and Radical Republicans pressed for action against the institution as a war measure. And very quickly, slavery began to disintegrate. Hundreds, then thousands, of blacks ran away to Union lines. Far from the battlefields, reports multiplied of insubordinate behavior. The actions of slaves forced the administration to begin to devise policies with regard to slavery.

Faced with this pressure, Lincoln put forward his own ideas. He first proposed gradual, voluntary emancipation coupled with monetary compensation for slaveholders and colonization of freed blacks—the traditional approach of politicians critical of slavery but unwilling to challenge the property right of slaveholders. Lincoln's plan would make slaveowners partners in abolition. He suggested it to the four slave states that remained in the Union—Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky and Missouri—but found no takers. In mid-1862 Congress moved ahead of Lincoln on emancipation, although he signed all its measures: abolition in the territories; abolition in the District of Columbia (with around $300 compensation for each owner); the Second Confiscation Act of July 1862, which freed all slaves of pro-Confederate owners in areas henceforth occupied by the Union Army and slaves of such owners who escaped to Union lines.

Meanwhile, Lincoln was moving toward a new approach to slavery. A powerful combination of events propelled him: the failure of efforts to fight the Civil War without targeting the economic foundation of Southern society; the need to forestall threatened British recognition of the Confederacy; mounting demands in the North for abolition; and the waning of enthusiasm for military enlistment, which sparked a desire to tap the reservoir of black manpower for the military. In September 1862 Lincoln warned the South to lay down its arms or face a presidential decree abolishing slavery. On January 1, 1863, he signed the Emancipation Proclamation.

Contrary to legend, Lincoln did not free 4 million slaves with a stroke of his pen. A measure whose constitutional legitimacy rested on the "war power" of the president, the proclamation had no bearing on slaves in the four border states that remained in the Union. It also exempted certain areas of the Confederacy under Union military control. All told, the Emancipation Proclamation did not apply to perhaps 750,000 of the 4 million slaves.

Unlike the Declaration of Independence, the proclamation contains no soaring language, no immortal preamble enunciating the rights of man. Nonetheless, it marked the turning point of the Civil War and of Lincoln's understanding of his role in history. The proclamation sounded the death knell of slavery in the United States. Everybody recognized that if slavery perished in South Carolina, Alabama and Mississippi, it could hardly survive in Kentucky, Missouri and a few parishes of Louisiana.

In his annual message to Congress of December 1862, Lincoln pointed out that crises require Americans to rethink their previous assumptions: "As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country." Lincoln included himself in that "we." The Emancipation Proclamation was markedly different from his previous statements and policies regarding slavery. It was immediate, not gradual, contained no mention of monetary compensation for slaveowners and made no reference to colonization. Instead, it enjoined emancipated slaves to "labor faithfully for reasonable wages" in the United States. For the first time, it authorized the enrollment of black soldiers into the Union Army. The proclamation set in motion the process by which 200,000 black men in the last two years of the war fought for the Union. Putting black men into the military implied a very different vision of their future place in American society than earlier plans for settling freed slaves overseas.

Lincoln came to emancipation more slowly than the abolitionists and their Radical Republican allies desired. But having made the decision, he did not look back. In 1864, with casualties mounting, some urged him to rescind the proclamation, in which case, they believed, the South could be persuaded to return to the Union. Lincoln would not consider this. Were he to do so, he told one visitor, "I should be damned in time and eternity." Indeed, in the last two years of the war, he pressed the border states to take action against slavery on their own, and made support of emancipation a requirement for Southerners who renounced the Confederacy and wished to have their property other than slaves restored. He worked to secure Congressional passage of the Thirteenth Amendment. This was another measure originally proposed by the abolitionists that Lincoln came to support. When ratified in 1865, it marked the irrevocable destruction of slavery throughout the United States.

Moreover, by decoupling emancipation from colonization, Lincoln in effect launched the process known as Reconstruction—the remaking of Southern society, politics and race relations. Lincoln did not live to see it implemented and eventually

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abandoned. But in the last two years of the war he came to recognize that if emancipation settled one question, the fate of slavery, it opened another: what was to be the role of emancipated slaves in postwar American life? The "new birth of freedom" ushered in by the war was one in which blacks for the first time would share. During Reconstruction this would entail a redefinition of American nationality—the rewriting of the laws and Constitution to embrace the abolitionist vision of a society that had advanced beyond the tyranny of race.

In 1863 and 1864, Lincoln for the first time began to think seriously of the role blacks would play in a postslavery America. In his "last speech," delivered at the White House in April 1865 a few days before his assassination, Lincoln announced his support for limited black suffrage in the reconstructed South. He singled out as most worthy the "very intelligent"—educated blacks who had been free before the war—and "those who serve our cause as soldiers." Hardly an unambiguous embrace of equality, this was the first time an American president had publicly endorsed any kind of political rights for blacks (this at a time when only six Northern states allowed blacks to vote). Lincoln was telling the country that the service of black soldiers entitled them to a voice in the reunited nation.

A month earlier, Lincoln had looked to the future in perhaps his greatest speech of all, the Second Inaugural Address. Today we tend to remember it for its closing words: "with malice toward none, with charity for all…let us strive to bind up the nation's wounds." But before that noble ending, Lincoln tried to instruct his fellow countrymen on the historical significance of the war and the unfinished task that lay ahead.

It must have been very tempting, with Union victory imminent, for Lincoln to blame the sins of the Confederacy for the war and claim the outcome as the will of God. Everybody knew, he noted, that slavery was "somehow" the cause of the war. Yet Lincoln called it "American slavery," not Southern slavery, underscoring the entire nation's complicity. No man, he continued, knows God's will. God might wish the war to continue as a punishment for the sin of slavery, "until all the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn by the sword." For one last time, he reiterated his definition of slavery as the theft of labor, now coupled with one of his very few public invocations of the physical brutality inherent in the institution (he generally preferred to appeal to the reason of his listeners rather than their emotions).

In essence, Lincoln was asking Americans to confront unblinkingly the legacy of bondage and to think about the requirements of justice. What is the nation's obligation for those 250 years of unpaid labor? What is necessary to enable the former slaves, their children and their descendants to enjoy the "pursuit of happiness" he had always insisted was their natural right but that had so long been denied them? Lincoln did not live to provide an answer.

Today we inhabit an entirely different world from Lincoln's. But the questions raised by emancipation continue to bedevil American society. The challenge confronting President Obama is to move beyond the powerful symbolism of his election as the first African-American president toward substantive actions that address the still unfinished struggle for equality. ■

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FDR: A Model for Obama?

To face today's crisis, the president-elect must take bold action, seize opportunity, experiment.

by TONY BADGER

As President-elect Obama and British Prime Minister Brown study Franklin Roosevelt's famous Hundred Days and look to him for inspiration, it is salutary to remember how unprepared FDR was for the financial crisis that faced him, and how improvisational his response was. The Hundred Days were to a large extent an accident. Roosevelt had to deal with the immediate crisis that had closed most of the nation's banks, but he took advantage of it by asking Congress to stay in session to pass unprecedented recovery and reform legislation.

CHRISTOPHER SERRA

Inauguration day, March 4, 1933, was a Saturday. New York and Illinois shut their banks that morning, the climax of months of relentless pressure that brought the entire banking system to a halt. Roosevelt's advisers, who had no plans of their own, turned to holdover Treasury and Federal Reserve officials for help. Those advisers resurrected proposals that had been drafted and set aside during the outgoing Hoover administration. Roosevelt proclaimed a national bank holiday on March 5 and summoned Congress into special session for the following Thursday. On Tuesday, March 7, Federal Reserve official Walter Wyatt was summoned to the White House to draft a banking bill. He asked what the administration wanted. The White House reply was spare, to say the least. "Ratify the Bank Holiday, preferred stock in the national banks.... The Bank Conservation Act, and a few things like that," Wyatt said in an oral history decades later. "I had a little slip of paper in my hand about that big, and I wrote one line on each subject. That's all I had to go by." In the days to come, neither bankers nor Roosevelt's administration team nor Congressional leaders had much to add to what Wyatt and his team proposed.

Wyatt was amazed at how unprepared Roosevelt's people were. "There wasn't anybody in that entire Brains Trust, apparently, that had given any thought—they certainly had no plans—or any real study to the problem created by this banking situation," he said. Wyatt worked feverishly in the next twenty-four hours to draft a bill. When he finished, he told the White House, "In the few hours we've got, you can't improve this thing. And you might ruin it." The House passed Wyatt's bill, the Emergency Banking Act, on March 9, after only forty-three minutes of debate, even though House leaders had been given just one copy of it. The Senate was slightly more leisurely, passing the bill later the same day.

Over the next three days Treasury officials and bankers tried to work out which banks would be safe to reopen. They erred on the side of optimism, but ultimately success would depend on a "man-to-man appeal for public confidence" by the president, as a memo from his advisers put it. When he addressed the nation in the first of his fireside chats, on March 12, it was a tremendous gamble. Roosevelt told Americans that it was safer to put their money back in the banks, which were scheduled to reopen the next day, than to leave it under the mattress. They believed him, and sure enough, money flowed back into the system. There was no Plan B—if people had continued to keep their money out, absolute disaster would have followed. The difference between success and failure was extraordinarily narrow.

Roosevelt had no carefully worked out recovery program ready to deliver to Congress. Yet in the following twelve weeks he succeeded in securing fifteen pieces of major legislation. The government was given new powers to regulate the stock exchange, determine the gold value of the dollar, prescribe minimum wages and prices, pay farmers not to produce, give money to the unemployed, regenerate a huge river basin spreading across six states, spend billions of dollars on public works and underwrite credit for bankers, homeowners and farmers. That towering legislative record has been the benchmark against which every successive president has had to measure his first hundred days in office.

The situations in 1933 and 2009 have similarities. In both cases, there is a discredited outgoing administration, a financial crisis, a lame-duck Congress that finds it difficult to act, a new president who is a talented communicator and has a substantial election victory margin and large Congressional majorities. But 1933 was also very different. The Depression had already been going on for more than three years. Between a quarter and a third of the industrial workforce was unemployed. Farmers, who were a third of the workforce then, were desperate. In 1933 there were none of the stabilizers that exist now to protect ordinary Americans: no bank deposit insurance, no unemployment insurance and no federal welfare. And the welfare and relief resources of private charities and local and state governments had been exhausted by the time Roosevelt assumed office.

The sense of desperation was palpable. Armed soldiers guarded government buildings in Washington. Commentators talked casually of the need for dictatorship. The passage in FDR's inaugural address that attracted the greatest applause was his promise that if Congress did not grant him the power he needed, he would take upon himself the emergency powers he would assume if he were leading the country in a war to repel a foreign foe. The wartime analogy was frequently made in 1933, and the justification of dealing with an emergency was

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Tony Badger is Paul Mellon Professor of American History at Cambridge University and Master of Clare College. His most recent book is FDR: The First Hundred Days *(Hill and Wang).*

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often inserted into legislation to protect it from constitutional challenge. Agencies like the National Recovery Administration were consciously modeled on their World War I predecessors. Many who had served in those earlier agencies returned to Washington in 1933 to staff their New Deal successors.

The atmosphere in 1933 had less in common with today's economic crisis than with post-9/11 Washington, when Congress was prepared to grant previously unimaginable powers to the president with the Patriot Act and a raft of other measures wrapped up in the national security blanket. In 1933 Congressmen were left in no doubt by their constituents that they were expected to support the president. Influential Southern Democrats, who controlled many key committees, were prepared to support measures that appeared to run counter to their conservative principles because of the emergency and because cotton and tobacco farmers were desperate for assistance. Western Republicans supported the administration's drive to rescue farmers and shared its distrust of Eastern financiers. Even conservative Republican leaders from the East dared not oppose a president whose boldness was supported by ordinary Americans, who wrote to the White House by the thousands, and by newspapers across the political spectrum. Will today's Congress feel the same pressure to support President Obama? Will freshman Democrats from conservative districts or Republicans from safe seats be willing to grant vast new spending powers to the government?

Desperate times impose constraints on a president as much as they offer opportunities. In 1933 Roosevelt had to act quickly to reopen banks, put people to work, provide relief and help farmers—without the apparatus of an effective, powerful government. At that time, most Americans' only contact with the federal government was through the Post Office or through the small peacetime military. Fewer than 5 percent paid federal income tax. The government had neither the necessary information to dictate policy nor the personnel to implement top-down programs. Who knew which banks were safe to reopen? The bankers themselves. Who knew industries well enough to draft recovery codes? The business trade associations. Who could induce millions of farmers to sign contracts to destroy their crops or reduce acreage in order to raise prices? Their farmer neighbors. Who could administer a new federal relief program? There were no federal agencies, so FDR had to use existing state relief administrations. What arm of government could take a quarter of a million young men from the cities and set them to work in the countryside in newly built Civilian Conservation Corps camps by the end of June? Only the Army could do that.

It is not surprising that Roosevelt therefore had a penchant for quick-fix solutions that might bring recovery without a permanent expansion of the bureaucracy or constant state intervention. Slashing government spending with the Economy Act (which cut government employees' salaries and veterans' pensions), propaganda drives to urge businessmen to keep wages up and various schemes of currency inflation all attracted Roosevelt. He never lost hope that tinkering with the currency—including a gold-buying scheme derided by the experts—would raise prices, particularly of farm products, and in itself bring recovery. He talked of "bold, persistent experimentation," but in fact he

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rarely admitted that any experiment had failed.

In the absence of a carefully prepared blueprint to impose on the country, Roosevelt seized opportunities. Once Congress was in session, he was persuaded to keep it sitting to pass farm legislation. Forty days into the Hundred Days there was no indication that there would be an industrial recovery program. Only when Congress threatened to pass share-the-work legislation, which would have mandated a maximum thirty-hour week for all workers, did Roosevelt propose the National Industrial Recovery Act. He asked his aide Harry Hopkins, formerly a professional social worker, to set up a national relief program only when existing appropriations to the states had run out. Roosevelt was skeptical of large-scale public works spending, and he opposed the federal guarantee of bank deposits. He accepted both only when it was clear that Congress would pass them.

Microeconomic intervention in the Hundred Days did not necessarily work. The National Recovery Administration codes of fair practice probably checked the deflationary spiral that had driven down wages and prices, but there was no mechanism for creating extra jobs in the private sector. Public works projects could not be launched quickly enough, and before the late 1930s scarcely anyone envisaged the levels of spending that would be needed to bring recovery. Roosevelt's biggest mistake was probably his failure to provide loans to business to finance new investment and expansion. On the other hand, the farm program was a success. In the long run it may have inhibited the necessary structural rationalization of American agriculture, but at the time it enabled desperate farmers to stay on the land until they could leave for jobs in the military industries during World War II.

International expectations of FDR were enormous. Throughout the Hundred Days, European leaders came to Washington to enlist his support for currency stabilization and the removal of trade barriers in the upcoming London economic conference. Roosevelt led them to believe that he would support an international recovery package that would restore the equivalent of the gold standard and revive world trade. But such a package would have imposed the discipline of a balanced budget and prevented the administration from raising domestic prices to reflate the economy. When FDR scuppered the London conference, European leaders, particularly the British, felt badly let down. Yet none of them had had any real intention of surrendering the economic advantages they had gained from their own protective tariffs and devaluations. International expectations of Obama are arguably even greater. Now, as then, European leaders will be only too happy to blame the United States for failing to make sacrifices (e.g., in energy policy) that they themselves have no intention of making.

Roosevelt did not allow the immediate demands of the economic emergency to dictate the postponement of reform measures. He established the regulatory principles for banking and the stock market that, refined in 1934 and '35, would produce financial stability for the next two generations—until they were relaxed in the 1980s and '90s. The right routinely denounces the New Deal regulatory regime for the costs it imposed on business. In 2009 those denunciations look particularly unconvincing. Roosevelt launched the Tennessee Valley Authority, a remarkable combination of flood control, cheap power production and regional redevelopment that could probably have only been passed in 1933, when state governments were so feeble and private power companies so discredited. Roosevelt also recognized that some reforms would have to wait. The groundwork had to be laid for Social Security, which would come in 1935. But both the Hundred Days and the longer-term New Deal showed that social reform could be launched in a depression, in contrast to so much social reform that had taken place during periods of prosperity.

Finally, in 1933 Roosevelt brought to Washington a remarkable group of public servants to staff New Deal agencies: intellectuals, lawyers, economists, farm specialists and social workers, notably women with social policy expertise, who entered senior levels of government in large numbers for the first time. They have been scorned by right-wing historians as impractical theorists, do-gooders who had never met a payroll and who were driven by intense antibusiness prejudice. Actually, they provided a model of disinterested public service that was socially concerned *and* competent. Let us hope Obama can instill the same zeal for public service in the young people who so energized his campaign and the whole political process.

At the top level, FDR's first cabinet contained the usual mix of conventional partisan appointments, especially of Southern and Western Democrats. But he made three strikingly unconventional appointments. Frances Perkins, the first female cabinet member and the first labor secretary without union credentials, masterminded the introduction of Social Security. Harold Ickes, a disappointed Chicago reformer, presided over the greatest public investment ever in the nation's infrastructure as interior secretary. Henry Wallace, a Republican farm journal editor who created a spectacularly successful plant breeding company, became the most expert and liberal agriculture secretary in US history. Obama's appointments in the fields of economic, scientific and energy policy show some of the same openness to intellectual expertise.

So, are there lessons from 1933 for Obama?

First, in an economic emergency, however distasteful it may be, you have to bail out the bankers and corporations. Second, any economic recovery package has to be bold—to create jobs, you have to spend a lot. Third, infrastructure investment works—as the New Deal's public works programs showed in highways, education, cheap electrical power and flood control. Fourth, while you do not have to postpone much-needed reforms, you don't have to get all your reforms passed at once. Finally, you cannot expect a recovery program, no matter how well prepared, to sail through unchallenged. You have to be nimble enough to accept some of the things Congress will insist on that you may not like. But there may be new and unexpected crises that can, as in 1933, offer opportunities to a president willing to take them.

In the 1930s the patrician squire Franklin Roosevelt convinced a textile worker in North Carolina that he "is the only man…in the White House who would understand that my boss is a son-of-a-bitch." However President Obama negotiates his first hundred days, his words and his policies also have to convince ordinary Americans who are victims of the credit crunch that he and the government are on their side. ■

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Your Guide to the Nation

This month* The Nation *Guide to the Nation, published by Vintage Books, hits the bookstores. Here's a free sample (much condensed), beginning with an excerpt from the Introduction by Victor Navasky and Katrina vanden Heuvel.

CHRISTOPHER SERRA

The Nation *Guide to the Nation* is for and about a community of committed, passionate people with hyperactive consciences and where they eat, shop, drink, learn, read, organize, research, hang out and get buried. It offers a Left Heritage Trail, entries on slow-food restaurants, coffeehouses, bookshop cafes, think tanks, greenmarkets, saloons, alternative TV, progressive websites, indie publishers, reading groups, enviro groups, green builders, theatrical troupes, food co-ops, worker co-ops and lots more. It's a mixture of *The Whole Earth Catalog*, *1,000 Places to See Before You Die* and *The Old Farmer's Almanac*. It's a Sears Roebuck catalog of tools and ideas for people who want to change the world—or at least the neighborhood. Like the magazine, *The* Nation *Guide to the Nation* is quirky and eclectic and quite contrarian, unique, improbable, handy, cheap at the price and priceless. [To order, see the ad on page 27.]

Bars, Pubs & Saloons

Scholz Garten. *Haben zie barbecue? Ja!* This landmark Tex-Deutsch restaurant, founded in the state capital by Confederate vet August Scholz in 1866, continues to be a key fueling stop for state pols, political buffs and members of the drawling class who cover the Statehouse spectacle. When Molly Ivins—who, like many writers for the muckraking *Texas Observer*, hung out here—died in 2007, her wake was held in the biergarten. 1607 San Jacinto, Austin, TX 78701; (512) 474-1958; scholz@austin.rr.com

The Weary Traveler. Writes *Nation* Washington correspondent John Nichols: "A snapshot of the real Madison—circa 1903, or is it 1967?—can be found at The Weary Traveler on funky Williamson Street. Old World pub with wooden floors and a long bar, local beers on tap, comfort food with flair, a portrait of Walt Whitman overlooking a room that even on the coldest winter night radiates a warmth steeped in poetry and acoustic folk, blues and world-beat music. The talk here is of politics…." 1201 Williamson Street, Madison, WI 53703; (608) 442-6207

Art Collectives

The Busycle. A bicycle built for fifteen, this pedal-powered traveling art piece, created by Heather Clark and Matthew Mazzotta, sits on the stripped chassis of a van. The Busycle travels to different cities on cross-country story-collecting tours. During stops, the crew invites locals to climb aboard, work the pedals and experience the purposeful power of pulling together. buscycle.com

Preemptive Media. Born at Carnegie Mellon University, this collective makes works of art that subvert actual technologies used by the government and companies to mine data and amass information on all of us. An example of their creations was the project Zapped!, which focused on radio frequency identification (RFID) tags used by companies like Wal-Mart to track products and sales. preemptivemedia.net

Publishers

Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company. As its motto, "Subversive literature for the whole family since 1886," indicates, Kerr is the granddaddy of radical publishers. Started by Charles Hope Kerr, the press has been publishing texts on radical labor and socialist history and theory since before the twentieth century. Kerr published the first three-volume English translation of Marx's *Das Kapital*. 1726 W. Jarvis, Chicago, IL 60620; (713) 465-7774; charleshkerr.net

Soft Skull Press. This radical outfit was launched in 1992 by Sander Hicks, punk musician (former lead singer of White Collar Crime), writer, activist. Soft Skull started life as a "guerrilla operation" in a Manhattan Kinko's, where Hicks was working the graveyard shift and assembling chapbooks written by friends. 19 W. 21st Street, Suite 1101, New York, NY 10010; (718) 643-1599; softskull.com

Bookstores

The Big Idea. Pittsburgh's only self-proclaimed lefty store runs itself like a nonprofit. It gets by on regular fundraisers and a staff of about twenty volunteers and offers a range of nonfiction titles not on display elsewhere in the city. 504 Millvale Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15224; (412) 687-4323; thebigideapgh.org

Red Emma's Bookstore Coffeehouse. Owned and operated by the workers, who are out to "subvert the logic of capitalism" and bring on the revolution. *Baltimore City Paper* called it the town's "Best NonBar Hangout"—the right mix of socializing and socialism. 800 St. Paul Street, Baltimore, MD 21202; (410) 230-0450

Culture Jammers

The Yes Men. In 1999, with the Seattle world trade meetings looming, Mike Bonanno and Andy Bichlbaum constructed a website for the WTO (GATT.org), which powerful people mistook for the real thing. The Yes Men were invited to appear on CNBC, at industry events and schools, and were assumed to be legit reps of the WTO. Since then they've impersonated many industry spokespersons. theyesmen.org

Philip Green's Top 10 Left Mysteries

***The Doorbell Rang* by Rex Stout (1965).** Nero Wolfe vs. the FBI! A young woman claims she is being harassed by the feds, and Wolfe and Archie Goodwin decide to take on her case. The plot turns on revelations about FBI boss J. Edgar Hoover

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in a *Nation* article by Fred Cook. No doubt about it—the best civil liberties mystery of all time.

Stuart Klawans's 25 Greatest Political Films

***Johnny Guitar* (1954), directed by Nicholas Ray.** Because a steely, imperious Joan Crawford faces off against the furious Mercedes McCambridge, *Johnny Guitar* has become known as a pathbreaking feminist Western. But it is also an allegory of the blacklist, in which demands for incriminating testimony are focused on the title character, played by Sterling Hayden, an actor who had named names before HUAC. An entire generation of cinephiles used this film, and Nicholas Ray, to argue that genre movies could becomes vehicles of individual expression.

Danny Goldberg & Eric Alterman's Top 10 Left Anthems

Patti Smith, "People Have the Power"; Marvin Gaye, "What's Goin' On?"; Bob Marley & the Wailers, "Get Up, Stand Up"; The Rascals, "People Got to Be Free"; Sam Cooke, "A Change Is Gonna Come"; U2, "Pride (In the Name of Love)"; Jefferson Airplane, "Volunteers"; Peter La Farge, "The Ballad of Ira Hayes"; Jackson Browne, "Before the Deluge"; James Brown, "Say It Loud—I'm Black and I'm Proud"

Left Heritage Trail

Italian Socialist Labor Party Hall. In 1900 the leftist Italian stonecutters in Barre raised $2,000 and built this meeting place and social hall. Rallies, speeches and debates, community gatherings and union meetings were held here. The building also housed a worker-owned cooperative store that sold fair-priced produce, groceries, dry goods and coal, paid for in scrip with the SLP logo on it. A National Historic Landmark. 46 Granite Street, Barre, VT 05641; (802) 658-6647; nps.gov/history/nr/travel/centralvermont/cv26.htm

Forest Home Cemetery. "The Forest Lawn of the Left." Here stands the Haymarket Martyrs' Monument, marking the graves of six of the eight anarchists wrongly condemned to hang for the deaths of seven policemen during a mass rally for the eight-hour workday in Haymarket Square on May 4, 1886. Emma Goldman, who was inspired by that tragedy to become an anarchist, is buried nearby. 900 South Des Plaines Avenue, south of the Eisenhower Expressway, Forest Park, Illinois

Locavore, Slow-Food & Organic Restaurants

Hominy Grill. A low-key restaurant that specializes in simple but beautifully done Lowcountry cuisine (think shrimp creole with okra and sesame-crusted catfish). Owner-chef and North Carolinian Robert Stehling opened Hominy Grill in 1996 in a former barbershop. He goes out of his way to support local producers, from whom he buys vegetables, meat, eggs and fish. His grits are stone-ground in an eighteenth-century water-powered grist mill near where he grew up (his father drives down every month with a supply of grits). 207 Rutledge Avenue, Charleston, SC 29403; (843) 937-0930; hominygrill.com

Bookshop Cafes

Busboys and Poets. Part cafe, part bookstore, part performance space, part meeting place, B&P is a popular rendezvous for progressives in the DC area, a major center of antiwar activity. Says owner Andy Shallal: "People that are in the peace movement are used to working out of church basements, you know, the environment isn't always the most beautiful, not always the most conducive to creativity and openness and thought provocation." 14th & V Streets NW, Washington, DC 20009; busboysandpoets.com

Mercury Cafe. Writes Nation Associate Annette Walker: "The Mercury Cafe defies categories. Established 32 years ago by Marilyn Megenity and friends, 'The Merc' is Denver's premier alternative political and cultural space and haven for organic dining and environmental consciousness. Windmills and solar panels grace the roof, and climbing plants blanket one side of the two-story building." 2199 California Street, Denver, CO 80205; (303) 294-9281; mercurycafe.com ■

Letters

(continued from page 2)

of right-wing Muslims and warlords, just as Iraq may be ruled by a sectarian gang of Iranian-backed Shiite religious fanatics.

So I disagree with McWilliams's point that we have to expend "blood" to fix Afghanistan. But "money," yes, and lots of it, in concert with the rest of the world. Does Iran want to stake a claim to influence in western Afghanistan? Let it pay for the privilege, with US encouragement. Does China want access to Central Asian energy through Afghanistan? Welcome, Beijing—that'll cost you billions in aid. Does India want to check Pakistan's far right and get that pipeline from Iran built? Come on in, New Delhi, and pay up. Does Europe want to get its caveat-saddled troops out of Afghanistan? Sure, but it'll cost ya. In the Senate, Obama and Biden co-sponspored a bill to provide Pakistan with $1.5 billion in economic aid every year for a decade. How about doubling that for Afghanistan, guys? And immediately. By dangling something like a coordinated $100 billion or so over the next ten years, and coupling that with a diplomatic surge among Afghanistan's neighbors, who support those "foreign-backed elements" that McWilliams rightly denounces, the United States can find its exit strategy. The cornerstone of all that is to offer the rebels—at least those willing to talk, and that won't include Al Qaeda—a deal that involves an American withdrawal from Afghanistan. Sadly, though, Obama seems determined to support Adm. Mike Mullen's plan to double US forces in that quagmire. That will make it Obama's war, and Obama's folly.

Robert Dreyfuss

Happy New Year!

Oak Park, Ill.

I am visually handicapped, so I listen to *The Nation* on tape. At the end, the speaker always says, "The end of *The Nation*, such and such date." All during the reign of Bush/Cheney I felt it might, indeed, be the end of the nation as I understood it. Now I feel like arguing with the speaker. It is the beginning of a new nation, brought to us through the Audacity of Hope.

Jim McNeese

Correction

The correct address for the group Resurrection After Exoneration, mentioned in Katha Pollitt's January 5 column: 3301 Chartres Street, New Orleans, LA 70117.

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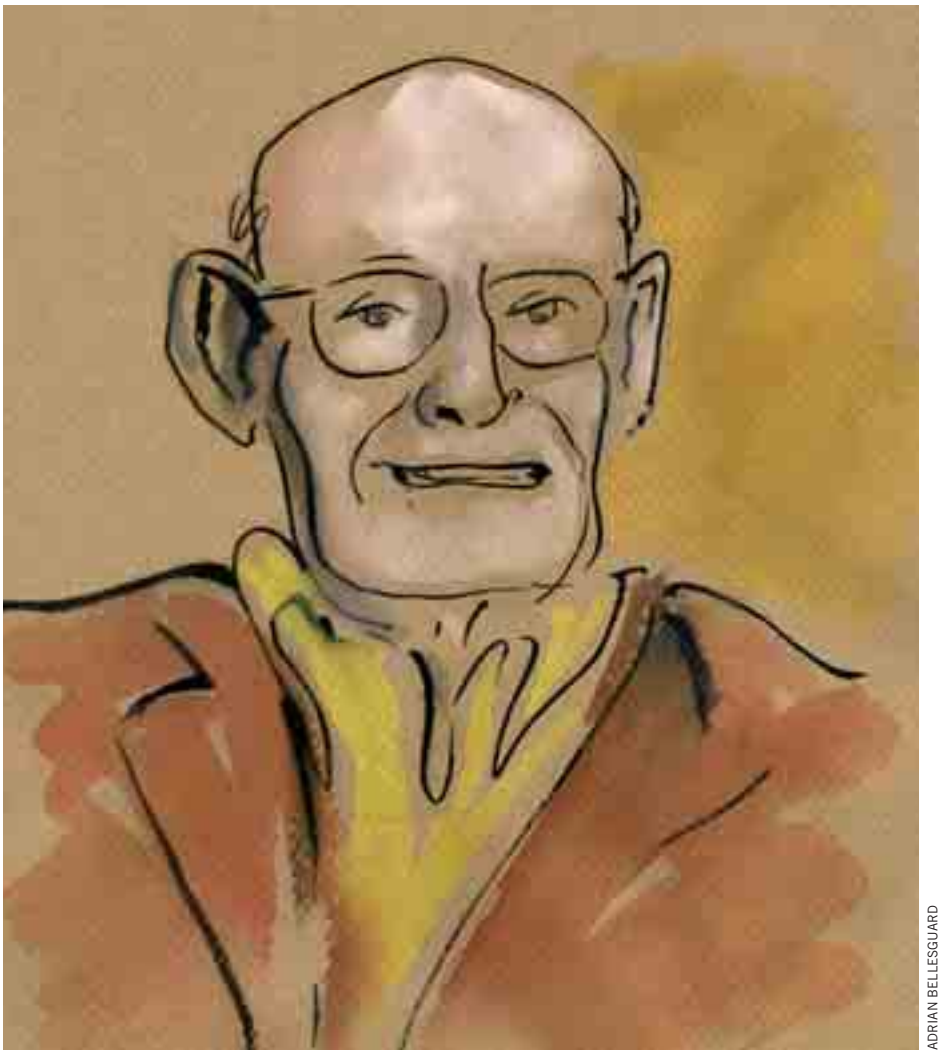
Books & the Arts.

Gospel Secrets

by ANTHONY GRAFTON



ADRIAN BELLESGUARD

Morton Smith

In 1973, Morton Smith, professor of ancient history at Columbia University, shook the world—or at least the world of scholars who work on early Christianity. Fifteen years before, Smith had found an unknown document in the Mar Saba Greek Orthodox monastery, fifteen kilometers southeast of Jerusalem—an ancient Christian text that no one before him had ever mentioned. A letter in Greek, originally composed in the second century by a church father, Clement of Alexandria, and addressed to one Theodore, it was handwritten in ink, in an eighteenth-century hand, on the blank end pages of a seventeenth-century printed book. Less than a thousand words long but rich in detail, the text attacked one of the wonderfully named sects that made the early centuries of Christianity so complex—the followers of Carpocrates, or Carpocratians. These heretics, as Clement and Theodore saw them, claimed that they possessed a secret version of the Gospel of Mark. Jesus, they believed, had taught his followers that they were freed from the law and could do whatever they wanted without sinning. According to one of their Christian critics, Irenaeus, they actually thought they earned salvation by "doing all those things which we dare not either speak or hear of, nay, which we must not even conceive in our thoughts."

Clement assured Theodore that he had been right to silence these "unspeakable teachings." But he also admitted that there was a secret version of Mark's Gospel—a version that the Church of Alexandria made available only to initiates. In a passage that Clement quoted, Jesus raised a rich young man from the dead in Bethany. "And after six days Jesus told him what to do and in the evening the youth comes to him, wearing a linen cloth over his naked body. And he remained with him that night, for Jesus taught him the mystery of the kingdom of God. And thence, arising, he returned to the other side of the Jordan"—a passage that suggests a libertine interpretation of its own, at least to the twenty-first-century reader. At the same time, Clement denied that an inflammatory phrase, "naked man with naked man," which the Carpocratians had cited, came from the true secret Gospel. The evil Carpocrates had obtained a copy of the text and "polluted" it with lies.

It was an astonishing discovery. A scholar can catalog thousands of manuscripts without ever striking this kind of gold. But Smith was perfectly equipped to assess the new text. Though American by birth and most of his education, he was a great philologist in the old European style. Long before he made the Mar Saba discovery, he had mastered Latin, Greek and Hebrew, and examined and photographed Greek manuscripts in monastic libraries on Mount Athos, the island of Patmos and elsewhere. As a student, he had savored the long, hypnotic services at Mar Saba. Now he spent his time going through the collection, book by book and page by page. When his philological dreams came true, he knew exactly how to make the best of his discovery. Before he left the monastery, he photographed the letter. Back in the United States, he spent years establishing and interpreting the text and consulting many other scholars.

Though Smith announced his find as early as 1960, at a meeting of the Society for Biblical Literature, and completed his analysis of the text by the late '60s, he did not release the new document until thirteen years had passed. Then he did so in two forms at once: a scholarly monograph published by Harvard University Press, *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark*, and a popular book published by

Morton Smith and Gershom Scholem
Correspondence, 1945–1982.
Edited by Guy G. Stroumsa.
Brill. 206 pp. $133.

Anthony Grafton teaches European intellectual history at Princeton University. His most recent books include Codex in Crisis *(Crumpled Press) and, with Megan Williams,* Christianity and the Transformation of the Book *(Harvard).*

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Harper & Row, *The Secret Gospel*, in which Smith pardonably dramatized the religious and personal adventures he had experienced on the way to his discovery. He argued that Clement had written the letter, that the secret Gospel really went back to the early church and that Jesus, as it suggested, had offered his disciples initiation into secret libertine practices. Later in his career, Smith would develop the larger thesis that Jesus had been a practicing magician, and that his revelations were steeped in widely attested magical techniques and beliefs.

But Smith's original arguments proved provocative enough. By July 1974 he had amassed, as he told a friend, "a dossier of newspaper clippings and reviews two or three inches thick, and an even thicker pile of private letters, some of them screamingly funny." The professional scholars chewed more slowly, of course, than the newspaper critics and religious polemicists, but within a few years they too had digested the new material and begun to respond to it—or, in some cases, to spew it out again. For more than thirty years, the document and Smith's interpretations of it have served as the grit around which layer on layer of scholarly pearl has grown. Debate is normal, of course, in scholarship—without it, we could not go on producing doctoral dissertations and scholarly articles. But most debates eventually come to an end, as one side clearly wins or all participants reach a consensus. By contrast, the secret Gospel of Mark continues to spawn commentary of radically opposed kinds.

Arguments about the authenticity of 'Secret Mark' have reached a staggering level of ingenuity.

Most experts went at least part of the way with Smith. The new letter soon found its way into critical editions of Clement's works. Few agreed that Smith's discovery offered privileged new evidence for the actual teachings of Jesus—a very ticklish subject, since the four Gospels were themselves written quite some time after Jesus' death. But a number of prominent New Testament scholars accepted the letter's internal quotations from Mark as genuinely ancient. Helmut Koester, a New Testament authority who has taught for many years at Harvard, argued that the standard text of Mark's Gospel actually derives from the secret one quoted by Clement. The long passage quoted by Clement removes an awkward transition in the text. And the fact that the young man is told to wear a single garment when he comes to Jesus for instruction could explain a curious passage in Chapter 14. According to Mark, a young man wearing a single garment was with Christ in Gethsemane when he was arrested. Though the police attempted to take him too, he fled, naked, leaving his cloak in their hands.

But it is just as possible to argue the opposite case: to dismiss the secret Gospel quotations as a pastiche assembled from pieces of the existing text—an equally satisfactory way, after all, to explain the young man's single garment—or even to reject Clement's letter as a fake, like many other texts attributed to early Christian writers. The archive of recognized fakes includes the letters that St. Paul supposedly exchanged with the Roman philosopher Seneca, and as many as 900 spurious sermons ascribed to the church father John Chrysostom. Some scholars have always thought that the new Clement letter belonged there.

But almost from the start, some have suggested a much more radical explanation. In 1975 Quentin Quesnell, a Catholic New Testament scholar, argued that the manuscript was a modern forgery—presumably, though he did not say so directly, the work of Smith. This theory has continued to find supporters. Two recent books—*The Gospel Hoax*, by a lawyer named Stephen Carlson, and *The Secret Gospel of Mark Unveiled*, by Peter Jeffrey, a Princeton musicologist, MacArthur Fellow and renowned expert on the history of liturgy—argue that Smith composed the text. The sexual undertones of the document have led some to suggest, explicitly or by innuendo, that Smith, a gay man, forged the text for personal reasons. In fact, Smith laid relatively little emphasis on the document's sexual implications, as opposed to the more general evidence, as he saw it, that Christ taught salvation through sin. But Jeffrey, in the course of an intricate, minutely detailed analysis, argues that Smith deliberately made his case by indirection, distracting readers from his true purpose as a magician distracts the members of his audience.

Who is right? One problem with the scholarly arguments—a problem that often comes up in arguments about the authenticity of a text—is that they have tended to move in spirals. Is the letter really by Clement? From Smith on, scholars have attacked this problem by comparing the letter's language and syntax with those of Clement's better-known works, using detailed indexes published in the 1930s. The document is full of words and thoughts that appear only in Clement. Some are unique. But does that mean, as Smith held, that Clement wrote it? Or that its author—perhaps Smith—steeped himself in Clement, using the modern indexes that listed every word in his writings, before he went to work? Some claim that the document uses too many words found only in Clement—is, in other words, too Clementine—to be genuine. Others disagree. In the absence of a complete corpus of his work—something we have for no ancient writer—how can we know, except by assuming what we want to prove? Stalemate threatens.

Some of the arguments, pro and con, have reached a staggering level of ingenuity. In the document, Clement warns against the Carpocratians' interpolated Gospel: "the true things being mixed with inventions, are falsified, so that, as the saying goes, even the salt loses its savor." This reads like an analogy between the words of the text and the Christians themselves, to whom Jesus had said, in the Gospel of Matthew, "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted?" But Carlson argues that ancient salt—which came in lumps, not in free-flowing crystals—could not be adulterated, as Clement suggests. Only after 1910 did a chemist find a way to keep salt from clumping. He, of course, worked for Morton Salt. Could Morton Smith have mischievously added the salt reference to assert his authorship, as forgers sometimes do? The new text was entered in the last pages of the 1646 edition of the letters of Ignatius of Antioch. The corpus of Ignatius's letters had included forgeries, which the editor of that edition, Isaac Vossius, omitted. The first page of Clement's letter actually faces the end of the printed text of Vossius's commentary, where the editor denounces forgers. Could Smith have chosen these endpapers for his text in order to let the cleverest readers know that he had written the letter himself? Or are these coincidences simply the result of chance? The more questions are raised, the more evidence is brought into play, the more the letter becomes a Rorschach for its readers and the harder some find it to decide what they think. Even Bart Ehrman, a University of North Carolina professor who has written some notably polemical popular works on the corruption and interpolation of all the documents of early Christianity, refuses to take a firm position on Secret Mark.

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One way to arrive at certainty seems obvious: study the manuscript pages, using scientific methods to date paper and ink, and assess the script, drawing on the less scientific, but still elaborate, methods of paleography. But if the scholarly disputes over Secret Mark resemble the caucus race from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the manuscript plays the role of the Cheshire cat. The volume of Ignatius's letters remained at Mar Saba, where Smith left it, until the 1970s. But then it was transferred to the library of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem. And here it disappeared—or so, at least, the librarians claim—without ever being subjected to chemical tests. Stasis again, so it seems.

The correspondence between Smith and Scholem opens a new window on 'Secret Mark.'

The situation is distressing—especially for those who admire, as many do, Smith's immense learning and independence of mind. For in his case it has particularly unpleasant implications. Smith was the kind of critic who makes grown scholars tear off their own heads for fear of reading his reviews. He regularly pulverized others' publications, compiling remorseless lists of errors and responding to stupidity with searing wit—as when he suggested that the printer had omitted one word at the end of an especially conventional article in the first volume of *The Cambridge History of the Bible*: "Amen." To a conference session in honor of one of his former students, the famously prolific and famously contentious Jacob Neusner, Smith brought two boxes of copies of Saul Lieberman's fiercely negative review of Neusner's "preliminary translation" of the Palestinian Talmud. When recognized during the question period, he read a prepared statement and then "began marching up the aisle like a staff sergeant, distributing the reviews to a stunned audience," an academic journal reported. Sometimes, Smith was more severe than his victims deserved. But to accuse him of forgery—or deception of any kind—is to call him a hypocrite of a particularly systematic and deliberate type. The worst thing about stasis is that it leaves these suspicions undispelled.

Last year, a distinguished Israeli historian of religion, Guy Stroumsa, set out to settle the question. His interest is understandable: as a young man, he played a minor but meaningful role in the story. In 1976 Stroumsa drove three other scholars—two of whom, David Flusser and Schlomo Pines, were among the greatest of the Hebrew University greats—from Jerusalem to Mar Saba, where they picked up the Vossius edition of Ignatius, still inscribed with the inventory number Smith had given it, and transferred it to Jerusalem. Flusser apparently thought Clement's letter a fake. But Stroumsa believes the document is genuine. He ascribes most of the resistance to Smith's groundbreaking discovery to more conventional scholars' prejudices: discomfort with what they thought they knew about Smith's sexuality, on the one hand; refusal to accept a radical discovery, on the other. "It is a well-known fact among scientists and epistemologists," Stroumsa has written, "that it takes a long time, up to thirty years, before scientific breakthroughs are widely acknowledged and their implications fully recognized. Smith published the account of his discovery in 1973. It seems the time has come to accept it."

To prove that Smith invented nothing, Stroumsa has published a fascinating collection of primary sources: Smith's correspondence with a lifelong friend, the twentieth century's greatest Jewish scholar, Gershom Scholem. Smith, an adventurer in life as well as in scholarship, went to Jerusalem in 1940 on a Sheldon Traveling Fellowship awarded him by the Harvard Divinity School. Caught in Palestine by World War II, he spent four years there. At the Hebrew University—the pre-eminent German university in the world in those days, thanks to its faculty of erudite, brilliant refugees—Smith studied classics with Moshe Schwabe and Hans Lewy and Jewish mysticism with Scholem. He helped translate Scholem's first great book on the Kabbala, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, and translated an ancient Jewish mystical text under Scholem's supervision. More remarkably, Smith wrote a doctoral dissertation, in Hebrew, on Tannaitic (early rabbinical) parallels to the Gospels and became the Hebrew University's first Christian PhD. Returning to the United States in 1945, he began a career in the Episcopalian ministry, then moved back into scholarship and became, eventually, a professor of ancient history at Columbia University, where he taught until 1990. From 1945 until Scholem's death in 1982, the two men corresponded regularly. Their letters, which Stroumsa and associates have edited, open a new window on Smith's career, the scholarly world in which Smith flourished and the Secret Mark.

For Stroumsa, the documents make one point clear beyond doubt: Smith could not have forged Clement's letter or Secret Mark. For Smith's letters show him discussing the material with Scholem, over time, in ways that clearly reflect a process of discovery and reflection. From the start, he was sure he had a new work of Clement's on his hands. In August 1959, Smith wrote to Scholem that "the material by Clement of Alexandria which I found at Mar Saba last year is turning out to be of great importance, and as soon as I get all minor nuisances off my hands I must work hard at it." Later that year he went into more detail, noting that the letter "contains some amazing information about the Carpocratians and the Gospel according to Mark." By early 1961 he was working up the materials that eventually went into his two books.

But the more radical conclusions took time to emerge. Not until October 1962 did Smith tell Scholem that "I am really beginning to think Carpocrates and the sort of things he represented (and especially the ascent through the heavens) were far closer to Jesus than has ever been supposed." If Smith really forged Clement's letter, then he also must have spent years deliberately deceiving one of the few scholars he deeply respected. Yet he showed remarkable equanimity when his efforts proved partly unsuccessful. When Smith's scholarly book on Secret Mark appeared, Scholem accepted the letter as Clementine. But though he appreciated Smith's evidence about the magical side of early Christianity as "very good and convincing as far as it pertains to the tradition of the original church," he also found himself "not sure whether the story can be truly taken as historical evidence about Jesus himself." Smith, in his reply, showed only gratitude for his friend's detailed critical response: "Your letter pleased me very much and I thank you most sincerely for writing me at such length about my book.... As to Jesus, I should perhaps have emphasized more strongly that *all* accounts of his teaching and practice are conjectural, and I claim to my own conjectures only that they fit the reports as well as any and better than most." This is the tone of a colleague in inquiry, not a foiled forger.

Scholem, after all, was famous as a scholar for two qualities: a passionate interest in the occult, esoteric and antinomian elements of the Jewish tradition, and a fastidious intolerance of incompetent scholarship that matched Smith's. In 1972 the

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Jewish scholar Amos Funkenstein and the Christian historian Martin Marty, as well as Smith, published reviews of the three volumes of *The Cambridge History of the Bible*. In the course of his detailed review of Volume 2, Funkenstein—who could quote reams of texts in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek and Latin from memory—complained that the book failed to deal with the influence of the medieval Jewish thinker Ramban (Nachmanides) on Christians like Meister Eckhart. From Scholem's erudite, minutely critical point of view, this apparently precise remark was actually a gaffe—one so serious as to reveal that Funkenstein was an ignoramus. "What kind of Jewish scholar is this," he wrote to Smith, "who can confuse the Ramban with the Rambam [Maimonides, the medieval Jewish scholar who actually influenced many Christian thinkers]?" Scholem's absolute rigor and integrity—as well as his dedication to the study of magic—inspired Saul Lieberman, an authority on the Talmud, to offer the greatest backhanded tribute in the history of scholarly irony when introducing him at the Jewish Theological Seminary: "You know that I believe that mysticism is nonsense, total and complete nonsense, but the history of nonsense is scholarship. And the man who is about to speak knows more about the history of nonsense than anyone has ever known."

No one understood Scholem's attitude better, or shared it more completely, than Smith. He took one lesson above all away with him from Jerusalem: "the difference," as he put it in 1945, "between books, on the one hand, that display a special way of thinking that is worth reflecting on, and all other books, on the other hand." Smith's sense that most scholarship was second-rate made him reluctant to become a professor, since he felt "more and more opposed to the reading of the nonsense that needs to be read to become an expert in any given research method." Even after he decided to cast his lot with *Wissenschaft*, and even after his success was assured, he wondered—as he confided to Scholem—"why is it that the study of religion attracts so many nitwits?" He took delight in witnessing the "squelches" that Scholem administered to lesser scholars during a conference discussion. Nothing pleased Smith more about the visiting professorship he helped arrange for Scholem at Brown University, it seems, than being able to explain why the university's professor of Old Testament did not want Scholem to require that students in his seminar know Hebrew: "He says he thinks there would be a number of students who would like to take a seminar with you, but who could not meet that requirement. (He is right at least as to one student—himself…)." To Stroumsa, it seems psychologically impossible that Smith could have spent years deceiving the man to whom he owed, and whom he admired, so much, and whom he saw as one of the few who shared his sense of what makes true scholarship.

Yet the depth and rigor of Smith's scholarship don't necessarily absolve him from suspicion. Great scholars—scholars intolerant of complacency, stupidity and error—have also been forgers. Erasmus, the greatest of the Renaissance humanists, insisted that theologians read the New Testament in the original Greek, not just the Latin Vulgate. He also omitted a controversial verse that supported the doctrine of the Trinity from his edition of the New Testament when he found that the Greek manuscripts did not contain it. This daring scholarly move brought swarms of traditionalists out of their nests, determined to sting him. He cheerfully beat them off—until they produced a manuscript written for the occasion in which the verse appeared in Greek. In his commentaries on the texts and in his satires, Erasmus rallied scholars across Europe to join him in extirpating the folly and ignorance of conventional theologians—for instance, the Dominicans who used the Bible to support the persecution of witches. Yet we know he forged a complete work by the early Christian writer Cyprian in order to support his views about Christian martyrdom.

Smith's letters, moreover, show that he possessed at least a couple of the qualities of the successful forger, and in spades. Unlike British and European scholars, most Americans receive relatively little training in composing ancient Greek and Latin. We have as yet produced no counterpart to "Herodotus at the Zoo," a brilliant homage to the Greek traveler and historian Herodotus composed by the legendary expert on Athenian pottery, J.D. Beazley. Smith, however, was a gifted and assured practitioner of prose composition—he wrote his dissertation and his first letters to Scholem in Hebrew. Most philologists, as is well known, have little sense of humor—something every forger needs. But Smith's letters are consistently witty, at others' expense and his own. In 1960, when he decided to turn down an offer from Cornell and stay at Columbia, he explained his decision to Scholem with a characteristically neat paradox: "If I buried myself in Ithaca I should never forgive myself for having sacrificed the theater and the opera and the galleries, but so long as I stay here I can indefinitely put off going to them, and feel happy and virtuous about it." A really good academic novelist—someone like Allegra Goodman, who wove the dismal straw of contemporary laboratory life into fictional gold in *Intuition*—could find rich material here for a tale of how the ironist of Providence and Morningside Heights became the forger of Mar Saba.

But another story—a less dramatic one suggested by the letters—seems much more likely to be the true one. When Scholem learned that the Mar Saba discoveries bore on the Carpocratians, he replied enthusiastically: "I am amazed to hear that there is still unknown information about the Carpocratians to be found. Those are the Frankists of Antiquity. Produce it as soon as possible!" The Frankists were the followers of Jacob Frank, an eighteenth-century Polish Jew who had taught that those who followed him were free from the law and should pursue salvation through ecstatic sexuality. In a famous essay published in 1937, not long before Smith joined him in Jerusalem, Scholem explored the mysteries of what he called "redemption through sin": "It would be pointless to deny that the sexual element in this outburst was very strong: a primitive abandon such as the Jewish people would scarcely have thought itself capable of after so many centuries of discipline in the Law joined hands with perversely pathological drives to seek a common ideological rehabilitation." In this characteristically imaginative way, Scholem, no religious believer, re-created the deep meanings that Judaism had even—or especially—for its heretics in another age.

> Scholem's way of thinking about redemption and salvation, religion and sex acted slowly on Smith.

How much of Scholem's vision did Smith take away with him from Jerusalem? Back in America in the late 1940s, Smith wrote to Scholem as a busy, engaged Episcopalian cleric, giving sermons and organizing youth groups. Soon afterward, however, he abandoned the church for the academy. The evidence of the letters—like that of his books—makes clear that he also abandoned, and even came to despise, Christi-

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anity (in one letter to Scholem he thanked "the non-existent" for a special piece of good fortune). Again and again, over the past 200 years, Christians and Jews raised in traditional Orthodox communities have found their faith challenged, or even destroyed, when a training in scholarship forced them to confront the fact that the Bible is not infallible. Bart Ehrman, for example, has described how studying New Testament textual criticism at Princeton Theological Seminary prompted him to stop "reading the Bible as an inerrant blueprint for our faith, life, and future" and to start "seeing it as a very human book, with very human points of view, many of which differ from one another and none of which provides the inerrant guide to how we should live."

As a midcentury Episcopalian, Smith would never have thought the Bible inerrant. But he did think almost that of Scholem. Could Scholem's enthusiastic comparison of Carpocrates to Frank have set Smith on the way to making Jesus a magician? Could Scholem's teaching have inspired Smith to rethink the nature of religious experience, and Christianity, and find new meanings in the life of Jesus? It seems very likely, to me at least, that Scholem's way of thinking about redemption and salvation, religion and sex, acted slowly but irrevocably on Smith—in just the time-bomb way that great teaching often acts: like so many of the great Jewish scholars he knew, he found in history of a particular kind a way to appreciate the emotional richness of traditions to which he could no longer pledge personal loyalty. In *The Secret Gospel*, Smith described Scholem's deep impact on him and recalled that when he told Scholem about the letter, "he pounced immediately on the mention of the Carpocratians," whose leader supposedly "taught that sin was a means of salvation.... A remotely similar theme was important in the writings of some seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Jewish heretics whom Scholem had been studying (Sabbatai Zevi and Jacob Frank)."

The newly published letters, though they suggest and support this reading, don't quite clinch the case: indeed, they suggest that Smith, writing years later, may have remembered as conversations exchanges that actually took place on paper. I believe that Smith really found his letter, and that Scholem gave him the framework into which he inserted it. But that's just what I think. Many will disagree. This time, the professor is the Cheshire cat. He smiles and is gone. ■

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A counterfeit hippocampus on display in Usak, Turkey

Tales From the Vitrine

by BRITT PETERSON

On a 1984 visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, a Turkish journalist named Ozgen Acar noticed a group of fifty artifacts labeled "East Greek treasure" that resembled a collection that had gone missing some twenty years before. The treasure, Acar suspected, had been snatched by grave robbers from Sardis, an ancient city in western Turkey, which served as the capital of the Lydian empire at its peak in the sixth and seventh centuries BC. (Herodotus tells us that its last king, the affluent Croesus, was the first person to mint coins of pure silver and gold, hence the saying "as rich as Croesus.") Acar, who had spent the previous decade tracking antiquities looters in the small towns surrounding Sardis, took his suspicions to the Turkish Ministry of Education. It turned out that the Lydian Hoard had passed through a number of smugglers and semireputable dealers before reaching the Met in the 1960s, and there was plenty of evidence that the Met had known something of the provenance of the objects at the time and willfully ignored it. The Turkish government sued the Met for the unconditional return of the cache and, after a six-year legal battle, finally won. In 1995 the Lydian Hoard was returned to the small town of Usak, in Sardis, sparking an outpouring of national pride and a flurry of copycat lawsuits.

The celebrations were to be short-lived. Unlike in other "source countries" such as Greece, Italy and Egypt, the people of Turkey are the product of successive invasions and migrations. Modern Turks, who are primarily descended from thirteenth-century Ottoman conquerors, have little in common, ethnically or culturally, with the Trojans, Lydians and Mycenaeans of the distant past. Perhaps not surprisingly, then, Turks have been most eager to tour attractions that showcase relics of their Muslim heritage, such as the Hagia Sophia, a Byzantine basilica later converted into a mosque, and Topkapi Palace, once home to the Ottoman sultans and the present custodian of their crown

Britt Peterson is assistant managing editor of The New Republic.

Loot
The Battle Over the Stolen Treasures of the Ancient World.
By Sharon Waxman.
Times. 414 pp. $30.

Who Owns Antiquity?
Museums and the Battle Over Our Ancient Heritage.
By James Cuno.
Princeton. 228 pp. $24.95.

Catastrophe!
The Looting and Destruction of Iraq's Past.
Edited by Geoff Emberling and Katharyn Hanson.
Oriental Institute. 87 pp. $29.95.

Thieves of Baghdad
One Marine's Passion to Recover the World's Greatest Stolen Treasures.
By Matthew Bogdanos
With William Patrick.
Bloomsbury. 320 pp. Paper $15.95.

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jewels. These sites each host about a million visitors every year, making them the two most popular attractions in Istanbul. Compare this with the little museum in Usak, which received exactly 769 visitors between 2001 and 2006, a number that failed to impress the Hoard's previous stewards: the number of people "who've visited those treasures in Turkey," sniffed a museum spokesman, "is roughly equal to one hour's worth of visitors at the Met."

At that time, the Usak museum was so poorly appointed that its lone security guard doubled as the ticket taker. The vitrines holding the objects were barely protected; there was no alarm system, and the lock was the sort one can pick with a hairpin. In 2005 officials were forced to admit that several pieces had corroded since arriving in Turkey; the Usak museum lacked sufficient funds to care for them properly.

So it should have come as no shock when, in April 2006, the highlight of the Hoard, a golden hippocampus (sea horse) much beloved by tourists and locals alike, was revealed to have been stolen. At almost twice the weight of the original, the hippocampus that was—and remains—on display was an obvious fake. Kazim Akbiyikoglu, the museum's curator and Acar's old friend and ally, was fingered as the thief. Acar, who had by then devoted twenty years of his life to winning back the Hoard, was devastated.

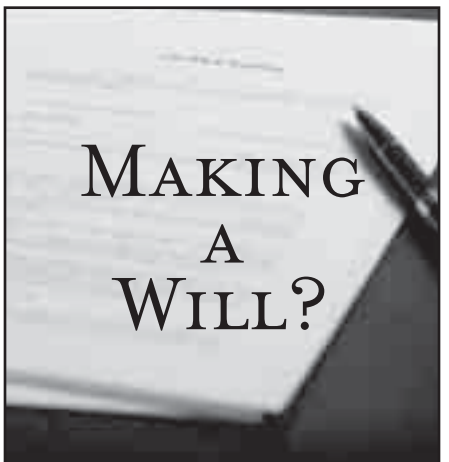
A verdict has yet to come down in Akbiyikoglu's trial, but the evidence amassed against him seems damning, and the case has exacerbated Western apprehension that museums in source countries are unequipped to handle precious antiquities. On the heels of such embarrassment, the Turkish government has been shamed into putting a stop to a stream of litigation against Western museums, much of which was likely to succeed. The hippocampus, to date, remains missing, most likely having been melted into bullion and sold on the black market.

In *Loot*, Sharon Waxman, formerly of the *New York Times*, investigates the Lydian heist as well as similar curatorial debacles around the world. On separate floors of Cairo's Egyptian Museum, she reports, two research teams feuding over trivial logistical matters simultaneously catalog the museum's rich collection of artifacts, each using its own distinct, incompatible notation system. Waxman stops by the then uncompleted museum at the base of the Acropolis—which is meant to house the Elgin Marbles one day, should the British Museum ever return them—where local protests and managerial incompetence delayed construction for years.

But Waxman appears to believe that, despite everything, these countries have some legitimate claim to the antiquities that have been taken through various semilegal and extralegal contrivances throughout the ages. And she is honest—often angrily so—about the ambiguous circumstances under which many of these objects left their homes. One of the best passages in *Loot* is a tour of the Louvre's cluttered, poorly labeled antiquities galleries, with Waxman supplementing the stingily worded display cards to create a panoramic exposition of French misadventures in Egypt. Visiting the Chamber of Kings, for example, where a three-wall bas-relief mural tells the story of eleven centuries of Egyptian royal history, Waxman corrects the Louvre's cursory explanation—"elements" were "lost in transport"—with a story of breathtaking greed and fraud: in the 1840s, a French explorer paid a midnight visit to a temple in Karnak, pried out the mural and bribed a local governor to allow him to ship it, in pieces, to Paris, where well-meaning workers coated the reliefs with a layer of varnish that soaked away the 3,500-year-old paint below, leaving the mural almost colorless. This section of *Loot*, as well as similar ones on the Met and the British Museum, makes one wish Waxman would turn the book's contents into a series of museum audio tours on tucked-under-the-rug looting scandals.

Waxman's extensive, empathetic reporting leads her to make some fairly minimal recommendations, the primary one being transparency. She also advocates closer cooperation between source countries and the West, suggesting that "the only realistic path forward is one of collaboration between poorer source countries so rich in patrimony and the wealthy industrialized nations that have the cash and expertise to preserve that patrimony." But she is vague about the details. How should courts proceed if the parties in question don't care to cooperate? It's true that a few source countries appear to have become more open to lending their artifacts for long periods of time, but what about curators in the West who fear that their cherished collections will be shipped out to museums as badly maintained as Usak's?

A vocal member of this last group is James Cuno, director of the Art Institute of Chicago, whose book *Who Owns Antiquity?* represents a shot across the bow and the greatest stumbling block to Waxman's modest proposal. *Who Owns Antiquity?* is a passionate apologia for the right of "encyclopedic" museums like the Met and the Louvre to house the world's cultural patrimony. The main thrust of Cuno's argument is that looting is inevitable and therefore museums, rather than private collectors, may as well be its beneficiaries.



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Source countries suing for restitution are motivated primarily by selfish, shortsighted nationalism, abetted by international courts and Unesco, which in 1970 passed a convention barring trade in looted artifacts. The only institutions that truly care about preserving, properly exhibiting and providing access to the world's great treasures are the encyclopedic museums of the West—not only the Met and the Louvre but also the British Museum, the troubled Getty and, of course, the Art Institute, among others. These museums, having transcended political motivations, allow art to be exhibited in the extranational context of the artistic tradition.

Cuno makes a sophisticated point about the difficulty of separating any thread of aesthetic tradition from the tangled skein of world influence. To claim that ancient Roman artifacts came from cultures that "developed autonomously in the region of present-day Italy," he reminds us, "is to willfully ignore the hybridity of culture and its multiple identities." In support of his concept of a global artistic realm that towers over nationalized identities, he marshals Edward Said and Benedict Anderson, putting a postcolonial spin on the Enlightenment ideal of the universal museum.

But the fit between postcolonialism and Enlightenment universalism is an awkward one, and it points out one of the flaws in Cuno's reasoning: his whitewashed vision of the encyclopedic museum. Here is Cuno's definition of his ideal: "This is the concept of the museum dedicated to ideas, not ideologies, the museum of international, indeed universal aspirations, and not of nationalist limitations, curious and respectful of the world's artistic and cultural legacy as common to us all." It's undeniable that a visit to the Louvre or the Met illuminates a vast, thrilling network of cultural resonance. Traversing a gallery that contains self-portraiture in the form of paintings by the seventeenth-century Dutch masters, late twentieth-century photographs and West African cult masks, for example, provides an education in comparative cultural self-representation that really can't be experienced any other way. (The Internet seems like a potential supplement, but neither Waxman nor Cuno addresses the potential for online exhibition and cooperation.)

But Cuno's nightmare vision that, through a few well-publicized restitution suits, the display cases of the West will be wrenched open to bleed forth valuable antiquities to the far corners of the world, leaving these grand old buildings tumbleweed-bare, is a fantasy. Such a process would be almost impossibly complex, and it is difficult to imagine that any source country would have the motivation or the means to carry it out. Second, many antiquities in the West were obtained legally, not even through the corrupted system of *partage*, in which source countries gave up their rights to discoveries made by Western-funded excavations. And most restitution suits center around single high-profile pieces rather than the meat-and-potatoes of these mammoth institutions. So the encyclopedic museum is not really under threat from what Cuno disgustedly calls the "nationalist retentionist" agenda. We will always have the British Museum, even if the Elgin Marbles go back to Greece.

Cuno's assumption that encyclopedic museums inhabit a universal realm that transcends culture and ideology is obviously wrong. This is true on an artistic level—surely displaying ritual objects on pristine white walls indicates something about the way Western culture believes art should be enjoyed—and it's true on a political level as well. The Louvre, for example, was founded by the French Revolutionary government in 1793 with the purpose of turning what had been a lavish royal palace into a temple of the people. But as France entered the colonial age, the Louvre became less the symbolic home of *égalité* than the repository of whatever trophies the empire's emissaries could lay their hands on. Napoleon's "savants"—a sort of scientific league of extraordinary gentlemen who traveled with his troops—were the first Europeans to alight upon the treasures of ancient Egypt, and the years of rabid excavation and art exportation that followed helped fill the Louvre's cavernous halls. These prizes, such as mummies displayed by the Empress Josephine in Malmaison, her country estate west of Paris, were meant to redound to the greater glory of France, not merely to celebrate the masses.

Can an institution be said to be beyond ideology when its history is bound up with colonialism and the same "palace of wonders" tradition that brought living, breathing *villages nègres* to nineteenth-century Parisian world fairs and the preserved genitalia of the "Hottentot Venus" to the Musée de l'Homme? Cuno seems oblivious to the imperialist taint on the tradition of the encyclopedic museum. He mentions, when listing examples from the Art Institute's collection that require a global context to be properly understood, a bronze plaque from the Benin Empire, taken by the British: "As retribution for the deaths of members of the British mission, a punitive exhibition was organized, which occupied the royal city of Benin in 1897 and led to the removal of hundreds of Benin bronze plaques, brass sculptures, and ivory tusks to Britain." He doesn't elaborate much on the "punitive exhibition" (usually referred to as a "punitive expedition" by other scholars), which involved days of looting and destruction and precipitated the collapse of the 400-year-old empire. The region (modern-day Nigeria) was left destabilized, and the British began a period of colonial dominance that lasted sixty years. Elsewhere, Cuno glosses over or completely omits the unfortunate legacies of some of the artworks he discusses. Most surprising, he makes a glaring error when he tells us that the Met received the Lydian materials through *partage*. Here one misses Waxman's corrective gaze.

For Cuno, however, to harp on this is to get hung up on ancient history. He reminds his readers that the Benin bronzes are divided among Chicago, London and various European cities, where they are loved and cared for and seen by many thousands of people every year. The idea of returning them to Lagos, one of the world's most dangerous cities, or anywhere else in Nigeria, with its poverty, civil unrest and ethnic violence, seems absurd, especially given that only ethnic Yoruba (about one-fifth of the population) claim any racial or cultural connection to the Benin Empire. But Waxman's prescription is not simply to pack up everything in the halls of Western museums and send it all priority mail back to the Third World countries whence it came. She recommends that museums be open about their complex legacy while seeking feasible ways to redress old wrongs whenever possible. Cuno may disapprove, but if recent developments are any indication, the future of museum collecting looks a lot more like Waxman's vision than it does his: flexible agreements with source countries for loans and joint expeditions, transparency about procedure and prov-

Caveat

There's a caveat on the living trees,
but don't chop up the dead wood:
especially not the trunks stretched
hollow, homes of snakes and echidnas.
When it rains hard they drum a bold
message, and when the wind stirs
through these sacred woodlands
they pipe like great church organs.
That's *your* patois.
Understand. Understand.

JOHN KINSELLA

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enance and a commitment from museums to obey the spirit as well as the letter of the law, determined by international conventions on art trading.

There is no place on earth where questions of patrimony and preservation are more urgent than Iraq, which, according to archaeologist Gil Stein, is undergoing the wholesale "eradication of the material record of the world's first urban, literate civilization." In *Catastrophe! The Looting and Destruction of Iraq's Past*, an exhibition catalog from the Oriental Institute Museum of the University of Chicago, Stein and other archaeologists and curators discuss the history of looting in Iraq and what is to be done about the future. Under Saddam Hussein—until the 1990s, at least—Iraq did a good job of protecting more than 1,000 archaeological sites, such as buried cities and tomb complexes from the Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian and Akkadian empires. Saddam, who fancied himself the spiritual descendant of ancient Mesopotamian kings like Hammurabi and Nebuchadnezzar, provided ample funds for the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, and set a high penalty on looting. (This scrupulousness did not extend to his neighbors' treasures; after invading Kuwait in 1990, the Iraqi army made off with nearly every item housed in the Kuwait National Museum.)

Following the Gulf War, with the country's economic strength on the wane, the looting of archaeological sites became far more common and the enforcement of antilooting laws declined sharply. Nor did this much seem to bother the West. John Russell, an archaeologist and former cultural adviser to the Coalition Provisional Authority, claims that "newly surfaced Iraqi artifacts were sold in the United States at venues to accommodate every price range: the major New York auction houses, brick-and-mortar galleries, online virtual galleries, and the burgeoning, anonymous, unregulated megamarket of eBay."

After the invasion, however, even beyond the piñata bash that was the Iraq Museum in the early days of April 2003, unlawfully excavated antiquities became as coveted on the black market as weapons. By May the Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani had issued a fatwa against illegal excavations; the United Nations passed a ban against traffic in stolen Iraqi art the same month. Still, an estimated 15,000 objects were stolen from the Iraq Museum, and more than half of these remain missing, including the museum's unique collection of Babylonian cylinder seals. Damage to the archaeological sites is unquantifiable, but through the use of DigitalGlobe aerial images, the Oriental Institute has assembled an extensive database cataloging the missing artifacts. As Roger Atwood writes in *Stealing History* (2004), "Antiquities pulled from the ground…have no…records, no catalogue numbers or schematic drawings, and so it is that much more difficult to detect them as they move through the market and, if seized, to prove that they were plundered." Even if the objects are someday returned, much of their history, not to mention their value, is lost forever. Without archaeological context, as McGuire Gibson writes in *Catastrophe!*, objects "are really just knickknacks. Beautiful and intriguing, but knickknacks."

Catastrophe! includes a day-by-day retelling of the looting of the Iraq Museum, an event that also features prominently in *Thieves of Baghdad* (2005), Marine Col. Matthew Bogdanos's first-person account of leading the museum's restoration effort. According to Donny George, a former director of the museum (he fled Iraq in 2006), the first looters were professional thieves who knew exactly what to target, and it's likely that many of them were linked to former or current museum employees. Later waves appear to have been more local, casual and indiscriminately destructive. Many of the writers of *Catastrophe!* blame the US Army for not securing the museum and Iraq's archaeological sites quickly enough or with sufficient manpower. Gibson and Russell describe the days leading up to the invasion and the years since as a frustrating series of memos ignored, phone calls unreturned. Atwood tells the story of a group of Iraqi curators and their two guards trying to defend the 3,500-year-old city of Nimrud from looters in the first days after Saddam's fall. After weeks spent dodging Kalashnikov bullets and watching as the looters carved slices of Assyrian friezes out of the walls with stonecutting tools, the Iraqis requested additional American protection; an infantry battalion finally showed up in May, too late to save the most important pieces. Bogdanos, on the other hand, details his exasperation with archaeologists who assumed the Army had total mobility throughout Iraq in the early days of the occupation. He points out that Saddam's army had used the museum as a fortress, and that securing it immediately would have required its bombing.

But everyone from Bogdanos to Russell, except Cuno, agrees that the vast illegal antiquities trade is the major impediment to curtailing looting in Iraq. Russell tells us that "as long as an unfettered worldwide market for Iraqi antiquities is allowed to provide the funding for this 'Iraqi problem,' the problem will not go away." Bogdanos, an assistant district attorney in Manhattan, disdains museums and dealers who buy stolen antiquities as having "no honor, no code, no rules." There is also a security argument against abetting antiquities smuggling, as smugglers who carry weapons and drugs out of Iraq often deal in antiquities as well, and the sale of antiquities appears to help fund the insurgency. Bogdanos mentions the discovery of a weapons cache in Anbar province in 2005: along with guns and armor, marines found more than thirty pieces from the collection of the Iraq Museum.

All of this puts the lie to Cuno's permissive stance on buying objects of dubious provenance. Cuno writes, "No museum has ever endorsed the looting of archaeological sites and the loss of the knowledge they contain. But in many respects, when faced with the choice whether or not to acquire an undocumented antiquity, the looting of the archaeological site has already occurred and the knowledge that may have been gained from the careful study of an antiquity's archaeological context has already been lost." Given the choice between condemning an item to the black market and "bringing it into the public domain," he reckons, why, "putting aside the legal risks," should a reputable museum hesitate to buy? And given that the Iraq Museum is presently under the control of Muqtada al-Sadr, why would we be eager to return the valuable flotsam that has washed up in the United States, Jordan, Switzerland and Japan?

Cuno's slipshod reasoning—his creation of a false dichotomy between buying antiquities illegally and abandoning them to the purgatory of the black market, his dismissal of the legal and ethical reasons for taking a stand against the purchase of antiquities that are likely to have been stolen—reveals the bankruptcy of his argument. To posit that nationalism is the only reason a source country would cherish its cultural patrimony is to rationalize thievery; the argument also diminishes the great power these objects hold, as evidenced by the numerous Iraqi civilians who risked their lives to protect the ancient artifacts of their land, such as the five staff members who holed up in the Iraq Museum during the first days of the invasion. Even many of the casual looters Bogdanos described seemed enthralled by, and desperate to protect, the objects they were "liberating." That may not be art for art's sake, but it isn't "nationalist retentionism" either. Substitute Iraq for Egypt or Benin, and the selfish oversimplifications of Cuno's defense become clear. Sometimes the best test for arguments about the past is a more thorough look at the present. ■

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PALISADES TARTAN

Maria Pankratz as Marianne in *Silent Light*

Guilt and Absolution

by STUART KLAWANS

If sin is a pursuit for the holidays, and redemption for the cold dawn of the year, then Carlos Reygadas's *Silent Light* is the rare happy film to have gone into theatrical release at the perfect moment. Now beginning an American run (at New York's Film Forum) after a long string of festival screenings, it comes into January with guilt and absolution as its very theme—I might almost say its rhythm.

There's a sense of contraction and expansion, as the events pulse through a small, tradition-bound religious community but a very broad rural landscape. The characters, by upbringing and godly habit, try to contain their feelings; the wide plains and distant mountains, meanwhile, draw their attention (and the camera's) toward something grander and more enduring than human life. And so, for all the intensity of the film, its style suits the new year like a hangover remedy. With bravura austerity, Reygadas chases the effects of December's cinematic bender: the stupefying round of Oscar contenders, the would-be amusements for the whole undemanding family.

As for Reygadas's setting—the present-day Mennonite community of Chihuahua—it would make *Silent Light* a rare film no matter when it was released. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first Mexican production to be shot mostly in a German dialect with a cast of blond, blue-eyed non-professionals.

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They're taciturn people, as Reygadas presents them. Johan (Cornelio Wall Fehr), his wife, Esther (Miriam Toews), and their half-dozen children are first seen in silent prayer at their farmhouse breakfast table, surrounded by morning light and the loud ticking of a wall clock. A young boy's yawn is the only human sound. Shown in steady close-ups and tightly composed groups of two or three, the characters might almost be figures in a portrait gallery, until Johan opens his eyes and says "Amen." Then you get the first of many well-considered shocks, as these photographic subjects come to life: pouring milk into their breakfast cereal, helping the baby eat, discussing their plans for the day ahead. Everything seems normal until the end of the scene, when Johan is left alone in the kitchen, and you get the second shock. Climbing up on a stool, he stops the wall clock, deliberately interrupting the flow of time that had only just begun. Then he sits again at the table and begins to weep.

After many tears shed in this lingering shot, and many miles of widescreen landscape observed in the next scene, you learn the reason for Johan's sorrow, and for the eloquently caring hand that Esther had laid on his shoulder. He has met Marianne (Maria Pankratz): his "natural woman," as a friend puts it, with whom he shares deep understanding and passion. Johan now believes his marriage to Esther is "a mistake"; but he can neither correct it (since it's been sanctified by God and all those children) nor give up Marianne.

At this early stage, Johan's intractable dilemma (and Esther's and Marianne's) is just something you hear about in the dialogue. You still need to see it; and so Reygadas, in his own good time, shows Johan and Marianne meeting on a flower-strewn hilltop (a strikingly open spot for a clandestine rendezvous), where they wordlessly enter into a deep, prolonged kiss.

Imagine a man and woman in their 40s—an age at which his smooth-fleshed Saxon features have become jowly, and her tautly sculpted face seems like an outcropping of her bony frame. Imagine such people embracing before the camera, with neither the handsomeness nor the suavity of movie actors. A third shock: you see how Fehr and Pankratz threw themselves into their unaccustomed playacting, earnestly joining their lips and tongues for lack of knowing how to screen-kiss.

By the end of *Silent Light*, there will be more than just a kiss; and though Reygadas in this film does not show anything half so naked as the non-simulated, non-actorly sex of his previous feature, *Battle in Heaven*, he still brings you into the realm of peep-show cinema. You get the forbidden thrill of watching religious people expose themselves; and that's not even half the advantage he takes of his subjects.

The really big, crazy opportunity that Reygadas seizes from the Mennonites is the chance to film his own, Mexican version of a spiritual drama by the Danish master Carl Dreyer. This improbable act of mimicry (or is it emulation?) makes itself felt as early as the kitchen-table scene, with its spare, white-walled interior and floods of even light. At the climax—moviegoers who know their film history might choose to stop reading here—the relationship of *Silent Light* to Dreyer becomes inescapable, as Reygadas remakes the great conclusion of *Ordet*.

The imitation is explicit, outrageous; and yet, in the midst of stunned disbelief, I felt deeply moved by it. To explain why, I might talk about the balance between bad faith and good, between willful showmanship and rapt devotion; but speculations like these would imply that I know the filmmaker's mind, and I don't. All I can do—and it's good to be reminded of this—is point to the outward signs in *Silent Light* that suggest an inner conviction.

Pacing is one of them. When Reygadas's camera dollies through a doorway much more slowly than the characters would walk, you may either feel impatient or else watch very closely, sensing that every detail must somehow be important. Similarly, when Reygadas's camera leaves the performers behind and wanders off on its own, you can either view the excursion as a stylistic flourish or else experience it as a profound act of sympathy with the characters, who are striving to look beyond themselves.

No music underscores the scenes (unless someone happens to be playing a radio); but the movie fills the air with ambient sounds, from thunderously chirping crickets to rumbling pickup trucks, as if to confirm that a material presence lies behind this show of colored lights. Sound becomes palpable, and so, too, does the weather. When a crucial scene is played in a downpour (rather than a screen simulation of rain), the characters' emotional turmoil becomes inseparable from the suffering of the drenched performers.

The most memorable of these signs—it seems to be obligatory for every review to mention it—is the masterful opening time-lapse shot by cinematographer Alexis Zabé, which begins in utter darkness and gradually reveals the breaking of dawn over the landscape. Lengthy, gorgeous and utterly devoid of narrative content, this initial gesture might as well be a notice to the audience, declaring that the movie is going to give a lot but will demand almost as much. I am as impressed as any fan of *Silent Light* with this virtuoso beginning; but the gesture that fully won me

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The Religious-Secular Divide

■ "The Religious-Secular Divide: The US Case" is the next social research conference at The New School, New York City, March 5–6. Keynote speaker: Charles Taylor. Tensions between religion and secularism are longstanding, widespread and increasingly fierce. These are evidenced by debates over evolution; separation between religion and education and between religion and science; and religious influences on political decisions. This will be a forum for discussions about the past and future separation between the religious and the secular. www.socres.org/religiousseculardivide.

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over comes at the climax, when Reygadas faithfully copies the moment of redemption in *Ordet* and at the same time alters it. If you haven't seen the original, the action will still stop your breath. But if you do know *Ordet*, you'll see how Reygadas daringly puts forward a much different agent of divine grace, and so progresses from aping Dreyer to conversing with him.

Silent Light is only the third feature in Reygadas's young but eventful career. It follows the drunk-and-disorderly abjection of *Japón* (2002), which took place in a rural shantytown set in a crack in the earth, and the mad, blood-soaked criminality of *Battle in Heaven* (2005), which reeled through a labyrinth of subway stations and grim apartments in Mexico City. Those films, too, had plenty of guilt, along with a surplus of extravagant talent; but redemption was in short supply, and tenderness scarcely to be found. Yet with a project more improbable than any he's tried before, Reygadas has found a way to be both astonishing and humane. *Silent Light* may be a "what the hell?" experience, but it's one that paradoxically makes you want to see, feel and think more clearly.

Because they hang on like a bad cold into the new year, December's prestige releases deserve at least one blow of the critical nose. Happy to oblige—but first, let me praise a few of the pictures that are truly worthy of attention.

Leading the group, and by a considerable distance, is Ari Folman's *Waltz With Bashir*: a documentary account of the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, and of the massacres at the Sabra and Shatila camps, which takes the startling form of an animation. By turns caricatural and phantasmagorical, the drawings lend pizazz to eyewitness accounts given by nine Jewish Israelis (Folman among them); more tellingly, these cartoons convey the film's troubling theme of the mutability of memory. Folman structures the story as a quest, in which he tries to overcome his amnesia about what, exactly, he did in the war. By the time he reconstructs the answer, the problem has expanded to one of national amnesia, which Folman corrects with devastating force.

Waltz With Bashir is brilliant, singular and not to be missed. *Cadillac Records* and *Gran Torino*, by contrast, are optional pleasures—though why anyone would pass them up, I don't know.

Written and directed by Darnell Martin, *Cadillac Records* brings you half a dozen of the biggest personalities to swagger onto the screen this year: Muddy Waters (as uncannily reincarnated by Jeffrey Wright), Howlin' Wolf (the hugely sardonic Eamonn Walker), Chuck Berry (played by Mos Def with boundless wit and charm), Little Walter (Columbus Short, who must have spent weeks picking the scenery out of his teeth), Willie Dixon (in a warm and knowing performance by Cedric the Entertainer) and Etta James (did you doubt that Beyoncé Knowles was a star?). It's wrong that this cavalcade of Chicago blues and early rock wasn't shot in Chicago; but when social history makes you want to shout, everything else is all right.

There's also plenty of social history in *Gran Torino*—on subjects such as the decline of Detroit and the changing character of immigration. But as both director and star, Clint Eastwood is too canny to dwell on them. He's making a movie—does anyone else in Hollywood remember how it's done?—and wants you to focus on the isolated, embittered, potentially dangerous character he's playing, as this tough old autoworker becomes involved with some unexpected young friends. By the end, all the thematic tensions about vigilantism that Eastwood has embodied for the past forty years are finally resolved, in a picture that would feel like a grand summing up if its author were not such a modest craftsman.

And now, a look at some of the season's immodest films.

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button: Giving new meaning to the insult "backward," Forrest Gump takes over Brad Pitt's body for eighty reversed but uneventful years—a life span that the audience seems to experience in real time.

Slumdog Millionaire: Who wants to be Satyajit Ray? The subject may be poverty and social change, but the name of the game is fun, and its clues are child beggars, Bollywood, call centers and the Taj Mahal—everything the average Westerner might know about India, short of Ben Kingsley in a loincloth.

The Reader: So that moviegoers may fret over the feelings of a young man and the really hot Auschwitz guard he used to date, five unrepentant Nazis receive light sentences for their crimes, in this exquisitely sensitive drama about doing the right thing.

Revolutionary Road: Fresh from her career in the SS, Kate Winslet moves to the 1950s suburbs and acts, and acts, and acts, and acts, until you're stunned by the play of emotions on her face but can't remember a word she's said.

Doubt: It was a dark and stormy night in American Catholicism, when Sister Meryl Streep and Father Philip Seymour Hoffman settled in for 104 minutes of shouting at each other. Co-starring Amy Adams as the sweetest young nun in the parish—a role I'd be happy to see her play, if John Waters were the director. Maybe in the new year. ■

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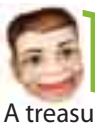

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ORGANIZATIONS

BERKELEY, CALIF., *Nation* discussion group. prehend@gmail.com.

ASHEVILLE, NC, *Nation* discussion group forming. Contact mgibney@unca.edu.

BRENTWOOD, CALIF. New *Nation* discussion group forming. We'd like to start meetings soon. Contact ibhernandez2003@yahoo.com.

THE SPOKANE/INLAND NORTHWEST *Nation* discussion group: Gil Murray, (509) 999-4502; Box 293, Cheney, WA 99004; e-mail: gbmurray2@aol.com.

SANTA CLARA COUNTY, CALIF., *Nation* discussion group meetings are starting up. Please e-mail loisaalbq@yahoo.com.

SAN ANTONIO *Nation* discussion group. Second Mondays, Grady's Bar-B-Q at San Pedro and Jackson Keller. Contact lenwheeler@satx.rr.com for more information.

ORGANIZATIONS

RICHMOND, VA, *Nation* discussion group seeks new members. Contact Wayne Young, (804) 232-8521, youngwayne88838@aol.com.

A NEW *NATION* UTAH YAHOO GROUP has been created at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/thenationutah. To join contact Sam Evans, (801) 791-8089 or sameritech@yahoo.com.

A NEW MADISON (WIS.) *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP will be meeting one Sunday afternoon a month. Interested in participating? Contact Helen Aarli, h.aarli@earthlink.net or (608) 244-0787.

BOSTON AREA. *Nation* discussion group seeks new members! Please contact Sam Pilato, sam@alcove.arlington.ma.us, (781) 643-0038.

ROCK HILL/FORT MILL, SC, *Nation* discussion group forming. Contact addgroup@comporium.net.

SANTA CLARA COUNTY, CALIF., *Nation* discussion group meetings are starting up. First meeting date: February 10. E-mail loisaalbq@yahoo.com.

DOVER, DEL., *Nation* discussion group is forming. Contact Bruce Dudley if interested, (302) 697-6057.

BRADENTON/SARASOTA *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP meets monthly. For further information call (941) 761-4873.

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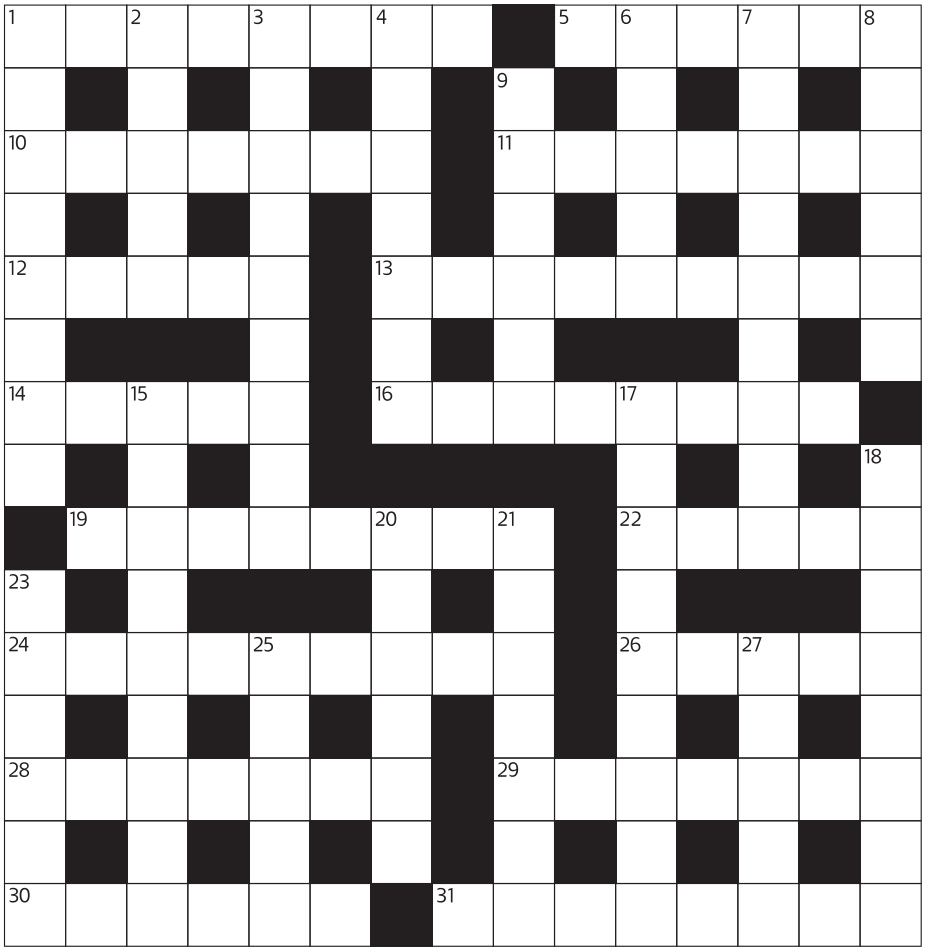
Puzzle No. 3153

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 and **12** Stories of the 5? Rather a Code of Military Justice. (8,2,3)

5 and **19** Manned in the last part of 12. (6,8)

10 Heavy string tying up the eggs in a city of Spain? (7)

11 Aries, possibly, on part of the paper. One goes on it when really angry. (7)

12 See 1 across

13 The means to an end, offering the next sort around a deep one, possibly. (9)

14 An important time to show up your muse? (5)

16 They reputedly hovered about God's throne. (8)

19 See 5 across

22 A drink with a degree of what some do on the floor. (5)

24 Twisted tail, surrounded by poetry—being able to do a lot of things! (9)

26 A case that might be a berth. (5)

28 Can't seem to walk straight, like those who add things up, according to the Brits. (7)

29 Sad meow, perhaps, in sheepish environments. (7)

30 Proving a bad sister shows the way to fight things. (6)

31 What you might do after the ride, when the sun breaks out, just to confuse you. (8)

DOWN

1 Held fast, and with a nuisance job in it. (8)

2 Not exactly worth what you do with a ball of it. (5)

3 Where they sing on high, sort of. (5,4)

4 How they call things in Chicago transport, or the things you might put on the surface. (7)

6 Ready for 5 across, having a couple of things on your side. (5)

7 A certain plane figure starts with only a portion coming up, but the next sounds easy, though I end up sounding hesitant. (9)

8 Does what one wishes, to put things in the office. (6)

9 Nice and correct, but sounds like one that could be a support. (6)

15 This art is confused about a certain state, which could be painful. (9)

17 Fleshy plant left at rioting UCLA with the onset of anarchy. (9)

18 Frilly stuff around a certain sea, which is fair game! (8)

20 Useless to bring it up, that is, so it's brought up inside! (6)

21 He really went through Georgia—like a tank! (7)

23 Miss Gardner and her sailor friend, possibly—in the form of a god. (6)

25 One swears so that a rhyme is not finished! (5)

27 Feeling great satisfaction, but one doesn't like flesh this way. (5)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3152

W	H	I	P	P	E	R	S		N	A	P	P	E	R
H		R		A		A		S		N		R		H
A	W	O	R	D		T	O	T	H	E	W	I	S	E
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O	S	C	E	O	L	A		P	R	O	T	E	U	S
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